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**EFFECTIVE  
BUSINESS ENGLISH**



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TORONTO

# EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGLISH

As Applied to Business Letters  
and Reports

By

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1927

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Set up and electrotyped.  
Published September, 1925.  
Reprinted April, 1926.  
" October, 1927.

*Printed in the United States of America by*  
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

## PREFACE

In business, as in all other fields, one cannot speak or write effectively unless he really has something to say. Hence the business man should possess both a knowledge of business practice, based on sound business judgment, and skill in the use of English. The author has, therefore, sought to give the college student, for whom this book is primarily intended, such information on business practice in general, and on salesmanship in particular, as is needed to enable him to write effective business letters. The principles of persuasive writing—the largest part of all business writing—and those general principles of composition which have a special significance in the writing of business letters are also presented.

Part I contains introductory material, showing the relationship of business writing to writing in its larger sense and emphasizing the importance of intelligence in business correspondence.

Part II deals with the salesmanship and language qualities of business letters, and their characteristic processes, and discusses the types of letters developed in response to special conditions arising in the conduct of business.

Part III characterizes the various types of business letters and outlines the business practice necessary to the writing of each type, the typical problems incident to buying, selling, and giving credit, and practical solutions of these problems.

Part IV deals with the elements, characteristics, and types of reports, which constitute a special form of business literature. The treatment is not exhaustive but sufficiently detailed for a college course.



The letters and reports quoted as models throughout are taken, almost without exception, from the actual correspondence files of representative business houses. Each illustrates some special point, and although even the good ones are not perfect in every respect, they lend to the theory they illustrate the authority of the firms sending them out, and give the student an idea of the standards prevailing in business correspondence to-day.

It is believed that the problems will be of great service in teaching Business English. They are the restatement of actual problems arising in the conduct of business which have been solved by letter, and most of them have been tested in the University of Illinois. The full statement of detail is given to familiarize the student with all the facts which would confront a correspondent; part of his training should be to enable him to tell what is vital and what is irrelevant.

I take pleasure in acknowledging the assistance which I have received from Professor F. W. Scott, Head of the English Department, and Professor H. T. Scoville, Head of the Business Organization and Operation Department; Professor N. A. Weston, Professor of Economics; Professor A. G. Anderson, Professor of Business Organization and Operation, University of Illinois, who have read one or more chapters of the mimeographed copy and made suggestions. I am also indebted to Professor Frank W. Clipping, Head of the Rhetoric Department, Lawrence College; Mr. T. J. Hammer, in charge of Advertising and Business Letter Writing, University of Alabama, and the members of the Business English Staff of the University of Illinois who have used the material of the text in mimeographed form and have made numerous useful suggestions about content and arrangement of material, and about letter problems. I am especially indebted to Mr. Carl Oesterling, who helped prepare a considerable portion of the manuscript, Chapters IV, XX, and XXI in particular, to Professor H. L. Creek, Head of the English Department, Purdue University, who read the manuscript, and to Pro-

fessor George Burton Hotchkiss, whose suggestions have greatly improved the text. I am indebted to the Ronald Press Company, the Engineering Magazine Company, the National Association of Credit Men and Harper and Brothers, the publishers of *The Literature of Business*, and The Macmillan Company for copyright material which has been included in the present volume. I wish to make general acknowledgment of the kindness of various publishers, business firms, and authors who have permitted me to use their letters for illustrative purposes, although specific acknowledgments will be found in the footnotes to many selections. Periodicals permitting the reprinting of letters are: Printers' Ink, The Mailbag, Postage, Advertising Fortnightly, Conde Nast Publications, The New Republic, Automotive Industries, The House Beautiful, The Foundry, and the Literary Review.

ALTA GWINN SAUNDERS.

Urbana, Illinois,  
August 21, 1925.



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EFFECTIVE  
BUSINESS ENGLISH





PART I

INTRODUCTORY SECTION



# EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGLISH

## CHAPTER I

### LEARNING TO WRITE

- A. The Meaning of Learning to Write.
- B. Can the Art of Writing Be Learned?
- C. Why Should We Learn to Write?
- D. Where Do We Begin? What Is the Procedure?
- E. Thinking and Analyzing.
- F. Imitating.
- G. Practicing.
- H. Criticizing.

As students of business letter writing, your ostensible purpose is to learn to write. In other years, with the help of teachers, textbooks, selected readings, and themes at the rate of two or three a week, you have been learning to write. Now, you find yourselves by means of still other selected readings, another text, and more frequent exercises in the form of letters, learning to write. You have turned from the writing of descriptions, narrations, expositions, and arguments in the elementary courses of composition, or from short stories, poems, essays, and plays, in the more advanced courses, to types of writing new to you, perhaps: business letters, reports, advertising copy, and articles for house magazines, trade journals, and business periodicals. Business letter writing has a new subject matter and new problems, but your chief aim in this course, as in other composition courses, is to learn to write.

It is not strange, then, if you should ask: Are we to spend our lives learning to write? Can we learn to write? Why should we learn to write? Where should we begin? What is the procedure? Wherein are these types of writing called business writing different from the essays, poems, plays, and stories called literature?

These questions we may consider in order, leaving their special application to the business letter for Chapter II.

**The Meaning of Learning to Write.**—Stevenson has defined for us in *Truth of Intercourse* the chief difficulty of writing. "The difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean,—not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish." In *The Art of Writing*, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch gives us four standards by which to judge good writing: Accuracy, perspicuity, persuasion, and appropriateness, all of which mean vigor and charm.

For these qualities we may turn to that well known letter of Abraham Lincoln to Mrs. Bixby:

November 2, 1864.

Mrs. Bixby,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Madam:—

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which would attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming, but I can not refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very respectfully and sincerely,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

As we skim the sentences, our eyes are arrested by phrases characterized by nicety in expression: "sons who have died gloriously," "beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming." Or where can we find a better example of beauty in diction than in the last sentence? "I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

This letter has charm, which is the essence of persuasion, as well as accuracy, perspicacity, and appropriateness, and you agree that here is good writing.

But you may object that Lincoln is writing a letter of condolence, while you wish to write business letters. Lincoln's letter is quoted because it illustrates the quality fundamental to good writing—appropriateness. Good writing is appropriate to the circumstances that create it, to the person addressed, to the subject matter, to the occasion, and to the writer's personality and character. Appropriateness is the vital quality of good writing; and wherever we observe expression in language, in fine harmony with the subject matter, whether it be about places, things, or ideas, there we have good writing.

If our aim is to recognize good writing, to acquire a taste for it, we cannot depend upon one or a dozen examples; we must indulge in a "general inclusive tasting" of what is considered best. If our aim is to recognize good business writing, we must read the best in this field.

**Can the Art of Writing Be Learned?**—One authority says, "Theoretically, any man of ordinary intelligence can learn to write. As a matter of fact, not everyone can," because "many men are born without enough will-power—enough strong desire, and continuity of purpose—to learn to write or to do anything else that requires knowledge or skill." Another says, "To what shred of conceit or even hope a man can be reduced after twenty-odd years of discipline" involved in trying to learn to write.

On the other hand, all the teachers of writing, all the rhetorics, and all the critiques devoted to the art of writing, by such authorities as Stevenson, Hazlitt, Emerson, Spencer, Poe, Ruskin, De Quincey, Buffon, and Schopenhauer (to mention but a few) are evidence of the belief that writing *can* be learned.

From this mass of literature, Professor Rollo Walter Brown has compiled a book of 348 pages and prefaced it with words of encouragement from William Morris: "Well, we, who have gone further into those troubles, believe that we can help you: true we cannot take your trouble away from you; nay, we may at first rather add to it; and then amidst the many things you will have to do to set yourselves and others fairly on that way, you will many days, nay, most days, forget your trouble in thinking of the good that lies beyond it, for which you are working."

**Why Should We Learn to Write?**—The question seems as foolish as asking why we should learn to talk, to walk, or to think. Perhaps we should not ask why we should learn to write, but why we should learn to write excellently. The latter question is not without point in view of the fact that there are few who care to be more than mediocre writers. There are some, however, who do wish to write excellently, and for them Stevenson states the great reason for mastering the art of writing: "the business of life is mainly carried on by means of this difficult art of literature, and according to a man's proficiency in that art shall be the freedom of his intercourse with other men."

To reduce Stevenson's idea to the terms of twentieth century business, we can point out that the most pressing problems of business today center not around the handling of material things, but around the *influencing* of men, and that the positions of greatest responsibility, those of superintendents, of managers, of directors of advertising and selling, require men proficient in the art of persuasion. This control for the most part must be accomplished by writing, for the physical limitations of the personal inter-



view require that most business be conducted by writing. Instructions of superintendents to department heads are through interhouse letters; those from general managers to branch managers, through intrahouse letters. Through letters, the sales manager directs his salesmen, prepares dealers for their calls, and announces new products to prospects and clients where salesmen do not call. Through letters, millions of dollars' worth of advertising and selling are done each year.

The high value placed upon good writing by some nationally known firms has significance in this regard. If you will come with me into the copy department of N. W. Ayer and Sons, the advertising department of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, or the office of the correspondence adviser of the American Rolling Mill Co., you will find a group of men in the thick of the struggle where good writing is a tradition and excellent writing discussed, dreamed about, and striven for. You will find people who talk about good writing, not for its own sake, or to express themselves, but to the end of evolving messages of service which make people feel, think, and do. They do not want their writing judged by their scholarship, wit, personality, and style, but by what they call its pull.

The following, quoted from a magazine article by a leading executive, shows an appreciation of good writing: "One of the five things I find out before I employ a man is whether he can talk and write effectively. This may seem a strange requirement, but it has been a very useful one to me. If we could unscrew the top of men's heads and look in, many of our problems would be eliminated, for we could see what sort of thinking goes on there, but since we cannot unscrew the top of a man's head, we have to judge his ability by the only outward expression, his ability to write."

This view concerning effective writing in business houses, although far from universal, is not exceptional. Our business men who look upon business as a profession are dissatisfied with merely adequate copy, merely adequate let-

ters. They want the best writing just as they want the best product, the most artistic illustrations, the best personal representatives, and hence they seek copy-writers and sales correspondents whose writing commands respect.

The motives for learning to write, in the field of business, vary little from those in the field of literature. Money is a by-product to many who write advertising copy and sales letters, just as it is to many who write stories, novels, and literary criticism. In fact, vanity cannot be a motive for writing sales letters and advertising copy as it may be for writing fiction, poems, or dramas. Most of the former writing is anonymous; it is associated with the product or with a firm and not identified with its writer. The business writer must be content so long as he makes people feel things, think things, and do things. His name is not inseparably linked with a product.

His writing probably reaches as large an audience as does that of the author of a magazine article or of a novel. The number of readers of form letters is limited only by the number of letters mailed and the interest inherent in these letters; the number of readers of advertising copy in magazines is limited only by the circulation of the magazine. And how many books are read by so many people as read regularly the advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, or the *Chicago Daily Tribune*?

Business writing is fully as permanent as journalistic writing. Advertising copy in the modern sense is yet too new to test its abiding qualities. Already, there are examples of advertising copy worthy of preservation because they are excellently written. "Time and Chance" by Elbert Hubbard, "I am the Printing Press" by Robert H. Davis, "On the Wings of the Morning" by Frank Irving Fletcher, and "The Years that the Locusts Have Eaten" by Bruce Barton, are some of the most noteworthy.

But in spite of the fact that we have many examples of excellent business writing, which make us aspire to prominence in the field of business writing, we have to admit that

most business writing is mediocre and that it will always be mediocre. It is this very fact that makes good writing distinctive. We can find, in the advertising pages of any magazine and in the sales letters of most houses, pathetic, ludicrous, or disgraceful errors in English. Business jargon and business slang characterize the writing of ignorant, lazy, and unprogressive firms. As the facilities for an education in the profession of commerce increase, however, business will no more be satisfied to admit into its ranks people lacking in culture than are other professions; and certainly business men whose business is writing will be satisfied only with such writing as is clear, vigorous, and persuasive. You who are now students of business writing can hasten the time when good writing will predominate, and you can help to create the type of writing which the best business writers are proud to have represent business.

**Where Do We Begin?—What is the Procedure?—**We have not completely answered these questions until we have learned to write, and then we shall have no need for an answer. We have made a beginning, however, when we can recognize good writing, have formed a taste for it, and have a strong desire to write well. We have made a beginning when we realize that learning is not sitting passively reading a book, or day dreaming in a class room. We have made a beginning when we realize that *learning* is an active and a vigorous effort of thinking, and that it is a constructive process.

But what is the procedure? Let us know, then, first of all that writing is an art, and that a successful writer is an artist. He must become as completely absorbed in his art as is the opera singer, painter, or musician. As the artist, deeply impressed by beauty, strives to recreate this impression for others, so sales correspondents and copy-writers are moved by an intense desire to make people think, feel, or act in a certain way.

That keen student of human nature, William James, has described how a man behaves when working under such a

stimulus: "If he really cares for a subject, he will return to it incessantly from his incessant wanderings and from first to last do more with it, and get more results from it than another person, whose passion for the subject is of a more languid and less permanent sort."

Not all of us, of course, have this enthusiastic ambition for writing. We have flashes of stimulus in times of stress when we know that getting a summer job depends upon our ability to write a good application letter, or the success of a college play on the quality of our advertising copy or of our sales letters. Most of us, however, will have to make our stimulus by deliberate intent or by sheer force of determination. But whether the desire is strong or weak, it can be strengthened by seizing the first pretext for writing, and each succeeding one as a prized opportunity.

The undertaking will grow more agreeable as we progress. We like to do what we do well, and we are likely to do well what we do often. Students in colleges are known to dance well, and they dance much; they are known to play musical instruments well, and anyone who has lived near a college fraternity knows that they play them much. When they spend as many hours in writing as they spend in the pursuit of these arts, they will probably write well.

But whether we begin to write as the result of an intense desire or a deliberate decision, we shall not write excellently without unmitigated and intelligent toil. As Mr. Ford worked to build his automobile, as the Wright Brothers worked to perfect the aeroplane, as Walter Hagen worked to perfect his drive, so we must work if we are to become expert in business writing. We must disregard the long hours of work, fatigue, and difficulties. Many a man who has succeeded in this art could tell us of working while others were playing, on Sundays, through vacations, after hours; of "living on nothing a week"; of persevering through illness and against all odds. He could tell us that his success depended upon taking the same infinite pains with his writing that the genius takes with his work.

**Thinking and Analyzing.**—Learning to write involves reflective thinking about writing, which in turn means controlling and directing our thoughts toward the means of learning to write. It involves reading good writing; but this everyone knows. To recall a few of the standard writers, in addition to those mentioned, who copy-writers have testified have helped them, we may mention Poe, Keats, Emerson, Macaulay, and a few modern writers: O. Henry, Kipling, Bagehot, Conrad, Sandburg, Bennett, and Wells. Learning to write involves, moreover, reading the best in advertising as well as in literature.

We also need to analyze good writing as we read it. Analysis of models is nothing more than reflective thinking about writing, which keeps in mind the end, defines the problem, and dwells upon ways and means of solving it. We need to find the principles back of a successful piece of writing, for a writer grows by putting principles into practice.

Also, we should seek contact, when possible, with experienced writers. As undergraduates we may find it difficult to meet those who make a business of writing, but every college has its teachers who write, and there are opportunities in various college organizations for hearing these men discuss problems of writing and criticize what others have written. There are courses in writing essays, short stories, news articles, and business letters, where intelligent discussions are held; there are always small groups of students who are sufficiently interested in writing to form scribblers' clubs and who come together for the purpose of reading and discussing what they have written.

**Imitating**—Learning to write for most students involves imitating. Experienced teachers of business letter writing are wary of recommending imitation as a virtue, for students imitate all too readily and too slavishly. However, Stevenson has recommended the method, and up to the point in our development where experimentation should begin, it has great merit. He said that he "imitated anything" written "with propriety," "with conspicuous pains," or



“with some distinction”; that in reproducing the same matter he would imitate the manner of several different authors, authors as different as Hazlitt, Ruskin, and Sir Thomas Browne. He sought constantly to gain in his own way the effects produced by them.

**Practicing.**—Journalists as a class probably surpass all other writers in the ease with which they write. We may account for this facility by the fact that they practice more than other writers. Mastery of an art is not acquired by merely reading about it, or studying the theory of it. Only by long and continuous practice can the writer apply the principles of his art. Although precepts have their place in swimming, we learn to swim by swimming; although they have their place in tennis, we must play continually to qualify for a tournament; although they have their place in writing, we shall not learn to write until to the precepts we have added practice.

**Criticizing.**—Finally, learning to write involves criticism and revision of writing. Success in writing, so far as it is achieved by the quality of sentences and diction, is due largely to revision. Painstaking attention is given to the clearness and the conciseness of sentences. Revision often means reshaping the entire work, eliminating extraneous material, and giving the material new proportions. It improves the style of writing as definitely as dressing improves leather, or cutting and polishing improves precious stones.

We have said little about business writing, and much about literature. It seems important, then, to say a word about the characteristics which distinguish business writing from literature. Whatever the differences between these two types of writing, they result from the aims and subject matter of the two types. The qualities sought in good business writing: appropriateness, clearness, and conciseness, are the same as in writing of a purely literary nature. The main differences between literature and business writing are treated under *The Nature of the Business Letter*.

## CHAPTER II

### NATURE, FUNCTION, SCOPE, AND PROBLEMS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

- A. Place of Business Letters in the Conduct of Business.
- B. Function of Business Letters.
- C. Letters as a Branch of English Composition.
- D. Letters in Relation to Salesmanship.
- E. Letters Compared with Advertising Copy.
- F. Letters in Relation to Psychology.
- G. Letters in Relation to Literature.
- H. Definition of Business Letters as Better Letters.
- I. Scope of Business Letters.
- J. Problems of Business Letters.
- K. Importance of Business Letters.
- L. Development of Business Letters and Modern Tendencies.

There are two conceptions of letters in the conduct of business. Singly, they are humble little tools performing the bidding of advertising, selling, and credits; collectively, they are a strong force for building up business or tearing it down. From the first point of view, they are just routine matters written merely to convey a message, and by ten, fifteen, or twenty-dollar-a-week correspondents whose chief asset is that they are efficient typists or that they permit neither stenographers nor dictating machines to inhibit their headlong dictation of ready-to-use phrases: "Your letter received, and contents noted, and in reply would beg to state."

From the second point of view, they are a special branch of business with individual problems, a branch so important that they have been distinguished by such epithets as "the intelligence department of commerce," "ambassadors of



trade," "links in a merchandising chain," and "silent salesmen." Letters are substitutes for personal interviews in the conduct of business, to be used to save time, effort, and money. Like the telephone and the telegraph, they are tools of communication, and are found superior to either in the privacy with which they convey messages, in the low cost of their services, and in their value as records.

As "silent salesmen," they go into thinly populated regions to perform all the steps of selling; they widen the market by being multiplied by thousands and tens of thousands and sent into all territories.

In firms where the importance of good letters is recognized, every man, from the president down, knows the futility of manufacturing the best products that science and skill can create, of broadcasting news of them with advertising that fills the mails with inquiries, if each firm's answers to these inquiries are not representative of the firm's personality, its product, and its service, and if they are not effective as salesmen. In such firms there are correspondence heads who direct their correspondence, and who have the power to coördinate the letters of the advertising, selling, credit, adjustment, and collection departments to a definite end.

A chart illustrating the scope of letters in the conduct of business would show them radiating in every direction from the three centers of business: Production, Operation, and Distribution. Letters incident to Production are inquiries concerning raw materials, letters ordering materials, hurrying up materials, or making complaints about materials. Those incident to Operation or Management are informal reports to stockholders and directors, and letters of instruction to branches of Production and Distribution. Those incident to Distribution are letters of advertising, selling, credits, collections, claims, and adjustments.

Letters transact eighty-five to ninety per cent of all business, leaving ten to fifteen per cent to be carried on by means of the telephone, the telegraph, and the personal interview.

The significance of this fact would become more apparent if the world should attempt for a single day to carry on all business without the use of letters.

Letters have an important part in the economy of business. They bring about wider distribution and increase production; at the same time they decrease cost of selling. Postal receipts, which register volume of trade, may be taken as an index to the condition of trade in the entire country or in a specific section of the country.

The place of letters among subjects of prime interest to business men was recently determined by means of a questionnaire prepared by *System*. The chart of results showed that they are regarded seventh in importance in interest, a place only twice removed from advertising, and on an equality with business conditions, statistics, and relative prices.

**The Function of Business Letters.**—Reduced to simplest terms, the functions of business letters are threefold. They are making a record, communicating a message to readers in such a way that they make sales, and building good-will for the firm they represent.

The record function of letters is important from a legal point of view. In giving credit information, in collecting money, and in making a contract, letters are fraught with serious responsibilities. They may cause those they represent much loss of money or involve them in litigation. Hence, correspondents must be able to express themselves clearly and definitely. They must know enough about legal points in letters to safeguard themselves and their firms.

The record function is important from a practical point of view. Correspondents cannot depend upon their memories for what they have written; moreover, one correspondent is not responsible for all the correspondence with one person, or on one subject, but gets what information he needs from letters on file.

Letters are called upon to perform a variety of functions, or at least to help to perform them. All of them, as was said above, center around Production, Operation, and

**Distribution.** They fall into certain types according to what they do. There are letters of order and of acknowledgment; of inquiry and information; letters that sell; letters that make claims and that adjust; letters about credit and letters that collect; application letters; letters that introduce and letters that recommend.

Each class of letter is also divided into smaller classes on the basis of what each group does. Sales letters, which represent the largest division, are always being put to new uses. They do educational or pioneer work with prospective customers before salesmen call, and follow up inquiries until they are turned into sales; sell direct-by-mail to dealers and consumers; induce prospective customers to come to retail stores to buy.

Letters, however, do more than make a record, or influence thought, feeling, and action to result in profit. They gain good-will for their firms in the manner in which they communicate ideas and influence feelings. So much stress is put upon this function of letters that correspondents are trained to think of every business letter as having two objects: one to accomplish a specific purpose such as to make a collection, or to refuse credit; the other to attain an ultimate purpose, the building of good-will, and, hence, continued patronage for the firm.

**Letters as a Branch of English Composition.**—Business letters constitute a branch of English composition which is distinguished from other forms of literature mainly through function and subject matter. While the novel or essay may be written for self-expression, business letters should never be, not even those answering the disgruntled claim letter in which we are likely to give free rein to our feelings. They are written to influence people to do definite things, or to feel in definite moods. They are by nature persuasive in that they seek to gain willing responses of thought, feeling, or action. The persuasive nature of letters is the basis for classifying them as a branch of composition, under argument or persuasion.

Sales letters and advertising copy have often been compared to literature because some of them are enough above the commonplace to be worthy of being called literary; some of them give the reader the same vision and feeling which the writer of the letter has had at the moment of its inception. Is not the style of the following sales description above the commonplace, and does not the writer give us her vision of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and a feeling for it?

Flagstones in the grass lead one to the glossy, green door with its handsome knocker, and going down two steps from the hall to the living room—once upon a time a wood-shed—one almost gasps at the sheer loveliness of the place. Gray landscape paper, soft cream hangings, rose tricolette draperies, deep arm chairs covered with a gorgeously designed chintz into which you sink and sink, rows of books set like jewels in the wall,—you would say a fairy's wand has created all this.<sup>1</sup>

We find literary gems now and then in sales letters in general and pretty consistently in sales letters for certain articles of luxury and travel, and for things of spiritual significance.

**Letters in Relation to Salesmanship.**—Business letters, in so far as they influence thought, feeling, and action, belong to salesmanship. While they may not have as their immediate object the making of a sale, most of them are sales letters to the extent that they help to take the steps preliminary to a sale. The immediate object of a letter may be to acquaint a customer with a firm or to describe goods in terms of use and enjoyment, but the accomplishment of these minor objects works toward the same end. Moreover, most letters are sales letters in method. Those exchanged by executives for the purpose of giving information are almost the only letters that are not persuasive. These are frankly expository. Even letters of instruction from execu-

<sup>1</sup> Fitzpatrick, Teresa S., Circulation Manager, *House Beautiful*.

tives should be sales letters because, to get the best results, they must be persuasive.

**Letters Compared with Advertising Copy.**—Correspondents, although they owe much to the study of advertising copy because of the training it gives them in succinct and effective expression, find they should not write advertisements when they write letters.

Form sales letters have more points in common with advertising copy than have other letters; yet they differ in many respects from advertising copy. The mailing list for any form letter is made up of people who are on a common basis in education, politics, religion, taste, and economic condition; hence, what is said and the manner of saying it are adapted to the particular group of people whom the letter strives to reach. Most clothing manufacturers, for example, have a special form letter for college professors, for college students, for doctors, and for lawyers. Letters are more personal than advertising can ever be. Tradition, the legal aspect, the fact that letters are from one definite person to another definite person, have surrounded them with an atmosphere of privacy. Although business letters are no longer written by hand, the typewritten page of letters has something more of the personal touch than has the printed page of advertising copy. In some respects, letters are less likely to carry conviction than advertising copy because they stand neither the white light of publicity nor gain the belief still accorded to anything in print.

**Letters in Relation to Psychology.**—Psychology has certain applications to the writing of business letters. If the writer is able to affect the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people, he is using what is called the knack of influencing people or the methods known as suggestion and argument which practical psychologists have formulated.

Psychologists have explained the mental journey which a man makes when he reasons and when he acts upon suggestion; and when and how to use argument or suggestion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These are explained in Chapter IX, p. 162.



They have taught us how to build up the well-known steps of selling: attention, interest, conviction, and action.<sup>1</sup>

**Definition of Business Letters as Better Letters.**—

Better Letters are those which accomplish their immediate purpose of making a definite impression or gaining a definite action, and their ultimate purpose of making profit. At the same time, they create good-will for the firm they represent, and do these things with the least expenditure of time, effort, and money. A Better Letter must carry a message of service. It may be interpreted thus:

“If a sales letter, it will induce the reader to spend his money for something he wants—or that we want him to want.

“If it is a collection letter, it will persuade the reader that the right and proper thing to do is to pay his bill—and like us for making him do it.

“If it is an adjustment letter, it will satisfy the customer, whether he is right or wrong.

“It will, above all, give definite information—not an answer, but *The Answer*.”<sup>2</sup>

**Scope of Business Letters.**—The foregoing definition makes profit the distinguishing purpose of business letters. Good-will building letters, according to the definition, become business letters just so far as their ultimate aim is profit.

In a broader sense, however, all letters presenting a proposition in such a way as to induce people to act upon them willingly are business letters. These include letters inducing people to join an organization, to vote in a certain way, to give to some cause, and to support some measure. They include also letters influencing public opinion as to the importance of public safety, sanitation, strike prevention, and morale.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IX, pp. 169-170.

<sup>2</sup> Newton, R. B., “Suggestion for Letter Writers,” *Postage Magazine*, New York.

Letters moulding public opinion are another type of business letter. They are a part of institutional advertising. Examples are the letters of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, which carry on an extensive letter campaign to foster and maintain the good-will of the public. Public utilities, civic institutions, and private corporations make much use of the good-will building business letters.

**Problems of Business Letters.**—Those who would improve letters take the point of view of management and conceive two problems predominant for letters and perhaps a third problem:

1. How can the cost of letters be reduced without impairing the effectiveness of the letter?
2. Up to what point is greater cost of letters justified by their increased effectiveness?
3. How much can a firm afford to pay for pride in the appearance, workmanship, or English of the letter?

Costs are affected by the knowledge and efficiency of dictators and typists, the quality of stationery used, and the technique of conducting a firm's correspondence. When the management attempts to reduce costs, it usually begins with direct costs. It substitutes a different quality of stationery for inter- or intrahouse letters from that used for a firm's customers. It uses form letters and form paragraphs to handle routine situations. It uses the many kinds of mechanical devices designed to cut down the necessity of human labor. When the management decides to increase costs in order to increase effectiveness, it considers indirect costs. It finds a correspondent who through good judgment in the practical affairs of business, knowledge of and skill in expression can do what two less qualified dictators could do. It employs typists with a better command of English, with more skill in typing. It spends more on stationery. It pays attention to the fact that a letter which



has a direct cost of thirty cents may have an indirect cost of thirty thousand dollars.

There comes a point, however, where to use better letters would be casting pearls before swine, where spending money is not an investment. Management, then, has to decide when letters have become a luxury or when it is paying too much for pride in appearance of letters in excellent writing, and in labor-saving equipment, just as men may pay too much for mahogany furnishings in offices.

**The Importance of Business Letters.**—Out of an understanding of the function of business letters and their cost comes an appreciation of their importance and an interest in Better Letters.

A student will probably first appreciate their value at the time of his graduation from college, when he finds himself struggling with an application letter. At this time, it seems the most important piece of writing ever penned, and it is likely to be of much consequence in his life. Many a business man first appreciates the importance of business letters when he finds that his inability to write an effective letter prevents his securing or holding a position of responsibility.

On the other hand, one need not learn the importance of business letters through experience, if he will accept what astute business men have said on the subject:

1. "To me, it is just as important to have properly written letters go out from an organization as it is to produce the best goods and to have the best salesmen sell them.

At the close of each year's business we have prepared for our stockholders a balance sheet.

The inventories, the plant, the working capital, the other items have for a number of years shown an increase in our assets of sound intrinsic value.

But we have never listed what in our judgment is the most valuable item of all—the *Good-will* of this company. Now every dealing that we have with a customer has its effect upon this company's *Good-will*. Every

letter has its effect. A man will write letters to a great many more people in a day than he can call upon.

A customer will receive more letters from us in the course of a year than calls from our salesmen. This is why the man who writes letters has a big responsibility to our organization."

2. "Through your letters the reader knows the National City Bank."

3. "Our company's standing in the business world is in a very great degree placed in the hands of the men who dictate its letters. The company's policies, its ideals, the esteem in which the company is held by the American public is affected by the hundreds of letters which daily are going to almost every city and state in the Union."

The importance of letters has been enhanced by romantic facts concerning letters, given out by the Post Office Department. Its Annual Report says that the total cost of the postal service of the United States for the year ending July 30, 1922, was \$545,644,208.54 and that the average expenditure per capita for postage was \$3.92. But when one of the leading officials of the Post Office Department had occasion to speak on the subject recently, he presented the facts thus: "Every eighty-six hours every man, woman, and child in the United States receives a letter. If the number of letters we mail every five days were laid end to end, they would encircle the globe."

The tremendous importance of the insignificant little letter appears when one considers the huge sums spent upon letters. Annual reports on letter costs for a certain bond house show \$1,250,000; one of a mail-order house, \$1,000,000; of a manufacturer, \$750,000; and of a packing firm, \$200,000. Some men have been more impressed with the cost of letters individually than by the total expenditure. One mail-order house found that each letter cost fifteen cents; a specialty concern, twenty-five cents; a tire company, forty-five cents; a life insurance company, fifty cents;

and a manufacturer, sixty cents. Even at the low cost of fifteen cents for a letter, the mail-order house computed the cost of letters of many correspondents to be as much as \$1,800 each month.

Further proof that business men appreciate the importance of business letters in the conduct of business is the number of articles on the subject appearing not only in such business periodicals as *System*, *Printers' Ink*, *Mail-bag*, and *Advertising Fortnightly*, but also in the *Outlook*, *Harper's Magazine*, the *Literary Digest*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. In some of our universities, we find as many as two thousand students enrolled in the courses in business letter writing, and in correspondence schools as many as ten thousand students. Metropolitan newspapers have their business letter sections, and each of these agencies, periodicals, universities, and newspapers has its finger on the pulse of interests of progressive firms, and each in its own way is trying to satisfy that interest.

Even better proof of the wide interest of business men in Better Letters is the fact that there was formed in 1917 a *Better Letters Association* devoted to the improvement of letters which has grown in membership and in service. It is now affiliated with the Direct-By-Mail Advertising Association, and shares the pages of its fortnightly bulletins. And the best proof is that a hundred or more firms throughout the country employ correspondence experts to do for their letters what the advertising chief does for their advertising, or the sales manager for the salesmen.

Letters occupy an important position because they form, as was said previously, a link of a chain in merchandising. First, there is manufactured the finest product that a firm can make; experts in advertising are paid huge sums to create a demand for it; trained and high salaried salesmen are employed to sell it; and then letters are used to answer the inquiries about it, to make the terms of payment for it, to collect money for it, and to see that it gives satisfaction.

If these letters which form a link fail to do their part as efficiently as any of the other links, they have destroyed the efficiency of the other links. The futility of employing a hundred-dollar-a-week advertising man and a twenty-five-dollar-a-week dictator becomes apparent. Stories of customers of long standing being lost by one ignorant, careless, or tactless routine letter are only too well known. This cost of letters measured in the loss of customers is indirect, and likely to be so great no accountant can find it.

Since letters act as representatives of firms, the most personal sort of representatives: since they are constantly creating a personality for a firm in the minds of their readers; since they make numerous contacts with customers: and since their cost is great, their part in the conduct of business is vital. It is imperative, therefore, that those who choose commerce as a profession be able to write good business letters.

**Development of Business Letters and Modern Tendencies.**—A glimpse here and there into the history of letter writing follows in the belief that if the above exposition has served to give an idea of the importance of letters, the knowledge that business letters are as old as writing itself will give them a new interest. Tracing the history of letter writing is like tracing the history of civilization, it follows so closely the movements of trade. As one writer has aptly phrased it, "There can be no intellectual development without material wealth. There can be no material wealth without 'business.' There can be no business without letters."

Our earliest letters have a human interest, since they show us how little human nature changes. They surprise us in their modernity in some respects, and charm us by their quaintness in others. For example:

### A COLLECTION LETTER

Letter of Crito to Plutarch. (About 265 B.C.)

Crito sends greetings to Plutarch: Nicias came to me and demanded the price of the seed which he said

he had put into the share of Protagorus for three years, amounting to 33 artabae; otherwise he said he is going to confiscate the hay in my field. If we treat each other in such wise, it would not be well. Please pay them with what you owe me.

Almost as far back as we care to go, even centuries before the coming of Christ, we find that letters formed a very important part in the everyday life of the people. They reveal the commercial life of Greece and Rome, and mirror the craft and the guild periods in trade.

Latin scholars find them a mine of information and interest. The letters of the eighteenth century, easily read because they are written in modern English, are worthy of study because their faults and their merits anticipate those of present day correspondence. Defoe in *The Complete English Tradesmen*, 1727, complained that tradesmen did not know how to express themselves in a simple, plain style appropriate to the purpose for which they wrote, and the subject matter about which they wrote. Their letters lacked clearness, conciseness, and often were characterized by "fine flourish." For example:

"Sir, yours received, have at present little to reply. Last post you had bills of loading with invoice of what had loaden for your account in Hambro factor bound for said port. What have farther orders for shall be dispatch'd with expedition. Market slacken much on this side, cannot sell the iron for more than 37 s. wish had your orders if shall part with it at that rate. No ships since the 11th. London fleet may be in the roads before the last storm, so hope they are safe: if have not ensur'd please omit the same 'till hear farther; the weather proving good, hope the danger is over.

My last transmitted three bills exchange, import 1. 315. please signifie if are come to hand, and accepted, and give credit in account current to

Your humble Servant.

The tone of correspondence since colonial days has changed much, but the change has been especially rapid in



the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of this century, following the invention of the typewriter. Interest was manifested in business letter writing in 1880, for commerce courses of this period listed courses in letter writing. The few textbooks on business letters at the beginning of this century show the continued interest of the business world in letters, most rapid during the last ten years.

Out of the attempt to make letters do what men had formerly done by personal interview have come certain tendencies in present day letters which distinguish them from letters of even ten years ago. The modern tendency is to restore through the letter the close relation that once existed in America between the buyer and the seller. The best firms are making their letters adequate representatives of themselves. If a letter represents a mail-order house, it is likely to be colored by the warmth of cordiality; if a department store, it may have a man-to-man tone, a certain frankness; if a bank, it may be conservative and dignified. It is no longer characterized by the formal politeness of the lord, or the humility of the servant, at one period the chief characteristics of all business letters.

To restore the close relation that once existed between a storekeeper and his customers, a correspondent adapts his letters to the people who are to receive them. The following two letters are illustrative:

### LETTER TO BUSINESS MEN

Dear Mr. Blank:

No doubt you've already gone over your business, taken account of its strong and weak points and determined to do a bigger, better business in 1924.

While you're taking stock of your assets and liabilities don't forget an item that's important to the success of every business man. We're speaking of good clothes.



For fine woolen fabrics, fine needlework, dignified style—for real quality of every kind—we're confident you can't surpass the economically priced spring suits we have now; Hart Schaffner & Marx made them.

All we ask is your inspection; we're willing to let the verdict rest on your business judgment.

Yours truly,

## LETTER TO WAGE EARNERS—AND TO FARMERS

Dear Sir:

If you're going to be buying clothes soon, here are some facts that will be of service to you no matter where or what you buy:

The way to save money on clothes is to buy quality—clothes that will wear well and look well.

To be sure of quality, there's just one thing to do, unless you're an expert judge of textiles, and that is to insist on a trustworthy label.

At this store we sell Hart Schaffner & Marx clothes. You know—everybody knows—that the Hart Schaffner & Marx label is an unfailing guarantee of fine quality.

We have those fine clothes at almost any price you'd like to pay, and whatever the price you'll be sure of a big money's worth.

Why not let us show you just how and why good Hart Schaffner & Marx clothes are good buys? We'll do it gladly, whether you're buying or not. Any time.

Yours truly,

Letters of information and instruction from executives to subordinates are often characterized by a fine courtesy which shows the changed relation between employer and employee. The same spirit of courtesy pervades interhouse

correspondence. It gives to letters less the tone of command and more the tone of persuasion. The following two letters of instructions to correspondents illustrate the two tones:

August 31, 1924.

To the Correspondents of the Company:

Be in your seat when the whistle blows.

Study what Efficiency means.

Talk nothing but business in business hours.

Do not loaf.

Keep everything neat and clean.

If anybody does not treat you right, see Mr. J. L.

Vegatos.

Pay no attention if others break rules—it's YOU we want perfect.

Loyalty—Be a booster for the firm, not a knocker.

Finally, remember we want you to get to the top and earn the highest salary possible in your position. Let us be the judge and you will not be disappointed.

THE MANAGEMENT.

August 31, 1924.

To the Correspondents of the Blank Works:

If you write a good letter, you make merchandising easier. On the other hand, every poor letter you send out makes it more difficult for our customers to do business with the Blank Works.

Every Blank Works' letter must be a real Worker. Its duty must be to assist our company in securing the satisfaction and the good-will of each customer and business acquaintance.

Every letter can do its part to strengthen the Blank Works' reputation for honesty, fairness, and courtesy in all conditions. It can build service on an answer that is clear, concise, correct, complete.

The reader's opinion of our company depends in a large degree upon the manner in which *you* reply to his letter. *You* are the Blank Works.

Then before you sign your name to a letter ask yourself,

“Would this letter suitably answer me if I were in the customer’s place?”

THE MANAGEMENT.

The movement for efficiency in correspondence has made a virtue of clear, direct, and accurate expression. The courses in commercial letters in schools, the training of correspondence supervisors in business, and the hundreds of articles on letters are accomplishing something toward this. Advertising copy writers constantly preach the gospel of making copy express the nature of the product. Letters strive to bespeak the nature of a firm and to extend its personality. No longer is it thought appropriate to employ the courtly style of colonial days, the ponderous style of legal writing, or the telegraphic style of the too busy business man. Appropriateness to the person addressed, to the firm’s personality, to the subject matter, and to the occasion is the ideal in the style of letters of progressive firms. Business letters are evolving a style of their own and an appropriate style, as this letter from the Alexander Hamilton Institute in answer to an inquiry to them exemplifies:

My dear Sir:

It is a pleasure to have your recent inquiry about our Modern Business Course and Service.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of our booklet, “Forging Ahead in Business.” This booklet will lay before you a plan for increasing not only your income but the pleasure you get out of your work.

Naturally you are interested in knowing just how the Modern Business Course and Service may be of definite assistance to you personally. We are asking our Mr. Chauncey M. Day to get in touch with you and to give you additional information. I know you will enjoy having a chat with him, and he will be very glad to answer any questions you may have in mind.

Very sincerely yours.

The answer, moreover, is representative of the modern tendencies in business letters. It has the personality of its firm; its cordiality is adapted to its reader; it is direct; and it is pleasing.

## CHAPTER III

### EQUIPMENT OF THE BUSINESS LETTER WRITER

- A. Knowledge of Psychology and Human Nature.
- B. Knowledge of Business Practices and Policies.
- C. Business Ethics.
- D. Character and Personality.
- E. Command of Good English.

**Knowledge of Psychology and Human Nature.**—It has been neatly said that a business letter writer is a salesman who can write. The nature of the business letter problem is such that the writer is always striving to influence men. He seeks to influence an employer to put him on his payroll; to influence a man who has asked for credit to pay cash; to influence a spendthrift customer to pay for food he has eaten and clothes he has worn; to influence a man to invest thousands of dollars in stocks and bonds. To accomplish these things, he must be not only a salesman but a practical psychologist as well.

“To explain how men are influenced is a problem for psychology,” we are told by Doctor Walter Dill Scott, who has made considerable application of psychology to business. The psychologist has made a study of feelings, thoughts, and actions; of what induces them and what controls them. He can explain to the layman why one man will do things only when he is given reasons for doing them or is shown a benefit to be gained from a certain course of action; while another man no sooner has the thought of acting than he begins to act. He explains the kind of things people can be influenced to buy through argument and the kind through suggestion. The list of the contributions of the psycholo-

gist might be extended, but enough has been given to suggest what application the salesman, who is also a writer, may make of the science of psychology.

In a time, too, such as the present, when there is an increasing tendency in all discussion to attach importance to the facts of human nature; when psychologists, in their inquiry into the behavior of people, take into account human differences and varying personal factors; and when we are in the grip of realistic fiction which allows not one trait of human personality to be hidden, business writers appreciate how vital to them is a knowledge of human nature. Only through knowing the mental tendencies, habits, and feelings of people do correspondents come to understand them and to sympathize with them; and on sympathy must they rely to bring people into agreement with them.

The following advice of Lincoln on the use of persuasion in influencing men gives us incidentally as fine and as authoritative a statement as we could wish on the value of knowing human nature:

When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced, persuasion, kind, unassuming persuasion, should ever be adopted. It is an old and a true maxim that, "a drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall." So with men. If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the great highroad to his reason, and which, when once gained, you will find but little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of your cause, if indeed that cause really be a just one. On the contrary, assume to dictate to his judgment, or to command his action, or to mark him as one to be shunned and despised, and he will retreat within himself, close all the avenues to his head and his heart; and though your cause be naked truth itself, transformed to the heaviest lance, harder than steel, and sharper than steel can be made, and though you throw it with more than herculean force and precision, you will be no more able to pierce him than to penetrate the hard shell of a tortoise with a rye straw. Such are men, and so must they be understood by



those who would lead them, even to their own best interests.<sup>1</sup>

We might think it unnecessary to counsel knowledge of human nature were it not for the fact that the mails are full of letters which disregard personality, talk down to people, and at them.

Surely the treasurer who allowed this curt letter to be mailed did not know human nature:

Gentlemen:

Please be advised that all future communications be addressed as follows:

.....Company,  
.....Mass.

Instead of:

.....Company,  
.....Mass.

Second Notice.

Very truly yours,

.....Company  
Treasurer.

Nor did the institute which sent an envelope addressed by means of a rubber stamp, "Head of the English Dept.", and in long hand, "University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois," know human nature.

A knowledge of human nature will help a correspondent to know at the time he mails a letter that its personality, tone, and style will aid rather than hinder its success. It will help him to know whether his letter will actually convey

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln, Complete Works, I.P. 197, Gettysburg Edition.

the right impression rather than merely attempt to convey the right impression.

Through all the ages people who have influenced others are those who have understood people. The writings of Shakespeare as well as those of Mark Twain have had great influence because these men knew and understood people. Shakespeare influences people because he gives kings and peasants a sense of comradeship with himself. Such popular writers as Mr. Bruce Barton, Mr. Robert Updegraff, and Mr. Ernest Elmo Calkins are influential as business writers because they understand human nature. Many a man who knows little about business practice succeeds because he understands men. This is not saying, however, that he would not have succeeded better had he known both business practice and human nature.

**Knowledge of Business Practices and Policies.**—We do not expect to produce a masterpiece in literature if we know little about literature; neither should we expect to write in a masterly way in business if we have not cultivated the business mind. To be explicit, a man who writes a credit letter for a wholesale house has to know the principles of credits, have the judgment to decide how they should be applied in a particular case, and be enough of a salesman to plan how he will induce a reader to accept his decision, if not enthusiastically, at least willingly. Not until he has thought of these things does he need a command of composition. What is true of the knowledge requisite for the credit letter is just as true of that for the collection letter, the adjustment letter, or the sales letter. It would seem foolish to argue the matter if it were not common for a correspondent to write a sales letter for a product without knowing enough about it to select the talking points which will build its value, or which point out for it a single superiority over other products of its type.

It may be the function of executives of a business to decide what effect a certain course will produce in business, and to shape its policies; but unless the correspondents who

represent these executives know what this course is and these policies are, they will not represent the business, but themselves. Correspondents who do not know business practice in general and that of their own business in particular are attempting to make bricks without straw. We should say, then, knowledge of business is the first requisite of the business correspondent.

**Business Ethics.**—Business ethics is inseparably bound up with the correspondent's equipment in business policies and business practices. Just as a definite code of ethics has been one of the characteristics distinguishing the professions of law, medicine, and teaching from business; so business, the latest of the professions, is promulgating its own code of ethics.

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States has recently enunciated a code of ethics for business in fifteen formal statements:

1. The foundation of business is confidence, which springs from integrity, fair-dealing, efficient service, and mutual benefit.

2. The reward of business for service rendered is a fair profit plus a safe reserve, commensurate with risks involved and foresight exercised.

3. Equitable consideration is due in business alike to capital, management, employees, and public.

4. Knowledge—thorough and specific and unceasing study of the facts and forces affecting a business enterprise are essential to a lasting individual success and to efficient service to the public.

5. Permanency and continuity of service are basic aims of business, that knowledge gained may be fully utilized, confidence established, and efficiency increased.

6. Obligations to itself and to society prompt business unceasingly to strive forward toward continuity of operation, bettering conditions of employment and increasing the efficiency and opportunities of individual employees.

7. Contracts and undertakings, written or oral, are to be performed in letter and spirit. Changed conditions do not justify their cancellation without mutual consent.

8. Representations of goods and services should be truthfully and scrupulously fulfilled.

9. Waste in any form—of capital, labor, service, materials, or natural resources—is intolerable, and constant effort will be made toward its elimination.

10. Excesses of every nature—the inflation of credit, overexpansion, overbuying, overstimulation of sales—which create artificial conditions and produce crises and depressions are condemned.

11. Unfair competition, embracing all acts characterized by bad faith, deception, fraud, oppression, including commercial bribery, is wasteful, despicable, and a public wrong. Business will rely for its success on the excellence of its own service.

12. Controversy will, where possible, be adjusted by voluntary agreement of impartial arbitration.

13. Corporate forms do not absolve or alter the moral obligations of individuals. Responsibilities will be as courageously and conscientiously discharged by those acting in representative capacities as by those acting for themselves.

14. Lawful co-operation among business men and useful organizations in support of these principles of business conduct are commended.

15. Business should render restrictive legislation unnecessary through so conducting itself as to deserve and inspire public confidence.

One cannot ignore the fact that a correspondent, because his words bind a firm legally and must stand the investigation invited by publicity, has a serious responsibility. As an advertising man he has no less exacting a motto than *Truth*, the motto of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World. As a salesman he has a moral responsibility. If he is a skilled salesman, he often has the power to exploit the mental and moral weaknesses of people addressed. The responsibility is grave; and the fact that selling and salesmanship to many connote trickery shows that “shop rhetoric” and the “flux of falsehoods” are of our day as well as of Defoe’s.

Authorities on salesmanship, however, stress mutual profit as the true ideal of salesmanship.<sup>1</sup> The sales correspondent is, moreover, prevented from sinking to a low standard in ethics by the fact that it is not to his self-interest to recommend inferior goods. His profits are made on repeat orders from the same customers, and from the reputation for honesty which his customers give him. So well do mail-order houses know the value of honesty in their dealings with men that they have been known to make recompense to a customer amounting to many thousands of dollars when correspondents have misrepresented them. Advertising agencies and clubs know how much harm may be done by misrepresentation, and a part of the work of a branch of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World is to prosecute such wrongdoing.

**Character and Personality.**—In the third place, the business writer needs to look well to his character and personality because his writing can never be separated from himself. To paraphrase what one man has said on the art of writing: as is a man's imagination, as is his character, as is the harmony in himself, as is his ear, as is his skill; so, and not otherwise, will his readers respond to that character, to that order of intellect, to that harmony of soul. A man, then, can improve the character and personality of his writing only by improving his own character and personality.

For a writer, moreover, to be convincing, he must speak from conviction and possess confidence, self-respect, and determination. The salesman who is habitually insincere betrays insincerity in his letters as much as in his face and in his manner. He defeats his own object since many people base their decision for buying, not on what they know about a product, bonds for instance, but on what they know about human nature. They can detect the sincerity or lack of sincerity of a salesman's statements, even when they are written, by their moderation or their exaggeration, by their genuine or false enthusiasm, by their assurance or hesitancy.

<sup>1</sup> Russell, F. A., *Textbook of Salesmanship*, p. 2. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1924.

**Personality.**—Certainly, personality is a part of the necessary equipment of the letter writer. We mean the term to connote not all that a man is, but that part of him which attracts people. We like the optimistic temperament, imaginative quality, and belief in people of the man who wrote the following letter:

Dear Mr. Smith:

Being a Landscape man myself I know your problems. You are a busy man—your time is valuable. I'll skip all the formality —

—  
—  
—  
—  
—  
—

and get down to the point. You have a little account with us which is 60 days overdue. You remember in your contract you agreed to send us a check before the 10th of each month. We were banking on our subscribers living up to this agreement. With 150 accounts you can readily see that printing and other expenses are tremendous.

Just now we are especially in need of funds, and I know that I only have to mention this matter to you and you will put a check in the enclosed stamped envelope and send by return mail.

Thank you!

(Personally signed)  
Secretary, The Garden Press.

Often it is warm-heartedness, a liking for "folks," or a sense of neighborliness that makes good letter writers. In selecting correspondents for mail-order houses, packing companies, the wholesale grocery business, and firms dealing on a partial payment plan, we should undoubtedly seek men who love their fellow-men. For certain types of correspondence, such as bank correspondence and credit corre-



spondence, we should prefer people characterized by reserve and dignity.

Some successful writers of sales letters say, "Give full play to your personality." Perhaps too much has been said about personality as equipment for a business correspondent. A writer can prevent the success of a letter by obtruding his personality or by letting the unattractive part of himself characterize his letter. The correspondent who boasts of his own accomplishments is making himself an obnoxious factor in his sales effort. The reader is likely to get the impression that the product is being sold on other bases than its merits. Similarly, any show of egotism defeats the purpose of the message. In the following example, the ego of the writer obtrudes itself flagrantly:

Gentlemen:

*We* are sending you by Parcel Post, enclosed with this, a beautiful plaque that *we* call the "Golden Plaque."

*We* think that *we* are fortunate to have secured such an attractive article. *We* are very glad indeed to send it to you with *our* compliments.

The sentiment that is contained in the verse on the plaque is educational and inspiring and one that all healthy minded people will endorse without reservation.

*We* hope that you will think of *us* occasionally when you look at it; *our own* advertising on it is extremely modest and does not in any way interfere with the attractiveness of the article. Still, of course, it is there, and *we* do not like to have it overlooked entirely.

*We* will take this opportunity to express again *our* deep appreciation of the favors you have shown *us* and to assure you of *our* wish to serve you satisfactorily in every way and to hope that *we* enjoy a full share of your favors in the future.

Trusting you may enjoy this little gift, *we* remain,

Very sincerely yours,

The dangers of unrestricted play of personality are obvious. All kinds of affectation are, of course, to be deprecated, for only sincere and unmistakable evidences of personal feeling are dependable. Bad humor, however much the circumstances seem to justify it, never indicates an admirable personality. Although good humor is always in place, smartness and self-conscious cleverness are often misinterpreted. Misplaced humor, of which the following letter is a rather mild example, is perhaps the most frequent source of offence of this kind.

Gentlemen:

George Washington—we'll say he was in RIGHT—No gloomy birds to spoil his fun and nag him day and night. He didn't break a law to take his little nip of rum, to warm up his great big heart and regulate his tummy-tum. He knew nothing about the income tax and no surtax did appear, so he could have a little of his money left each year. There were no robbers and hold-up men to take away his kale, no taxi bandits and it wasn't necessary to wear a shirt of mail. The profiteers back in those years were modest till it hurt. If you were robbed THEN, they left you at least your pants and shirt. No goody-goodies blocked all joys at every turn; jazz was unknown—a thing which would make George's cheeks burn. G. W. did everything to make this country free, we vow—BUT wonder what he would say IF HE COULD SEE IT NOW.

Frankly, we think George would order some NO-TAKIK—etc.

Very truly yours,

In most cases, if the correspondent forgets himself entirely while concentrating upon accomplishing his purpose of benefiting someone else, he will give his letters a personality pleasing to his readers. If he decides that he should cultivate certain traits of personality, he will find that the right time to do this is between his periods of writing. On such occasions, he may reflect upon his characteristics, not to

the end of being puffed up or cast down, but to discover what are agreeable to people and what to foster.

**Command of Good English.**—When we commend to some business men good English as a part of the mental equipment of business letter writers, we meet a point of view expressed by such remarks as: “Rhetoric never sold a can of beans” and “Why bother about English so long as letters get results?”

These remarks imply, “Good English is not *important* to effective letters.” Letters may secure results in spite of bad English, but this is not saying that good English would not have helped them to get better results.

Those who believe that good English is not important to the success of a letter probably do not understand the meaning of good English or its function. Men who sell things are not interested in color work, illustrations, or English for their own sake. They are interested in any element if it is needed, in combination with other elements, to get results desired, and good English is needed to get results. Although the reputation of a firm for good products, policies, and service may counterbalance the poor English in its letters, letters do depend largely upon the quality of the written composition to accomplish their purpose.

The standards of correct usage and good taste, in matters of words, sentences, and paragraphs, to which recognized writers conform and which are applicable to business letters, are given in Chapter XI, where their need in the practice of writing becomes most apparent. Elementary rules of grammar are omitted on the assumption that they are familiar to students in advanced courses in business writing, and that for individual need a handbook of essentials of English may be relied upon. However, it may not be amiss at this point in the text to remind the correspondent that good English is concerned with the elementary rules of grammar, relationship of pronouns and antecedents, agreement of verbs and subjects, the position of adverbs, phrases, and clauses, particularly phrases of time, place, and man-

ner, the appropriateness of prepositions, and with the clearness of conjunctions. Even the slightest error in grammar may cause a break in copy which keeps the reader from reading right along.

Current standards of good English are dependent on conformity to custom in language; that is, to the manner in which recognized writers use the language. The necessity for conformity to custom springs from the nature of language. It is a code developed by people for the purpose of communicating thoughts and of conveying feelings. The effectiveness of any code depends upon its meaning the same thing to the person who writes it as to the one who reads it. A writer's failure to use the code correctly results in his being misunderstood, in his offending the reader, or in his preventing the reader's having confidence in him. The man who wrote the following paragraph does not make himself understood:

We thank you very much for your order of May 2nd, for a number of items of visiting Cards, we are forwarding this order to you, but you have included only one sample of cards, which was a panel card, and is similar to our #213, we are forwarding 1 box of this, and you ask for a box of cards as per sample, since you include only one sample, we inferred that you want a box of cards exactly the same size as the card submitted, this is our #113, of which you have already ordered an item of #113, now most likely you have an order for these cards, and we therefore, have taken the liberty to include with your order 2 boxes #113, instead of 1 box. We hope this is satisfactory to you.

Yours very truly,

The following letter, which fails to conform to good usage in matters of sentence and of paragraph units, imposed difficulties in understanding upon the reader.

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of recent date, concerning the oxfords which you stated are not satisfactory, upon ex-

amining them we find that they are in fairly good condition, as it is characteristic of patent leather to check in the creases after being worn a short time. Under the circumstances, also as patent leather is not guaranteed, we do not feel that we are responsible and are unable to accept the oxfords for credit. We will, however, be glad to redress them for you gratis if you desire. We will hold them until we hear from you regarding the matter. When answering please mention our claim No. H 8589.

Hoping that you will see our side of the case in refusing to give you a new pair of oxfords, we remain

Yours very truly,

In spite of the letterhead of the following letter informing us that the firm represented is an Advertising Service that Serves, we doubt the quality of the service because of careless disregard of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Gentlemen:

We have just closed a contract with the Bank in your City to put on the Blank Campaign in securing new accounts. we have sent them newspaper cuts copie of ads and etc. And we wish you would kindly solicit them for the advertising on this Campaign so there will be no delay in getting the Campaign started.

You will kindly send us Ten copies of the edition in which this Blank ad appears and oblige.

Very truly yours,

Good English communicates a message and transmits feeling clearly, correctly, and delightfully. Good English conforms to standards of correct usage and good taste. This ought to mean that the best language of daily life is chosen. Good English is largely a matter of good manners. Our justification for writing to a man is that we have a message of interest to him. Whether we make the message clear and interesting depends upon our command of language.

# CHAPTER IV

## MECHANICAL MAKE-UP

- I. IMPORTANCE OF ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE OF BUSINESS LETTERS
- II. STATIONERY
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- III. ELEMENTS OF THE LETTER
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- IV. STANDARD LETTER FORMS
  - A. Indented Form.
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  - D. Hanging Indention.
- V. MISCELLANEOUS POINTS ON THE MECHANICS OF THE LETTER
- VI. ENVELOPE ADDRESS
  - A. Position.
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- VII. OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE
- VIII. SHEETS AFTER THE FIRST
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### IMPORTANCE OF ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE OF BUSINESS LETTERS

The physical appearance of a letter is a large factor in the communication of the message. A letter which looks good to the reader at first glance has a much better chance of being read attentively than one which looks cheap, or messy, or over-loaded. If the paper feels good as he unfolds it, if the color suits his taste, if the heading is well set up, if the typing of every part is expertly done, and if, above all, the contents appear easy to read, his mind is likely to be more receptive to the message than if his first impressions are unfavorable or indifferent. An appropriate make-up not only gains attention but, by suggesting that the writer is careful and reliable, helps to win the reader's confidence. A firm is distinguished by a high standard of form in its letters, and thus acquires the reputation for having an efficient correspondence department.

Not only the most pleasing appearance but also the greatest utility is to be considered in the make-up of a letter. The present standard form has been evolved through attempts to give the reader all necessary information as efficiently as possible. Employing standard forms in number and placement of parts, the writer can devote his whole effort to the expression of the message. The reader, like-

wise, being accustomed to such an arrangement of parts, saves time in handling the letter and responding to the message. The chief factors affecting appearance are:

1. size and quality of stationery,
2. style of heading,
3. placement of the letter on the sheet,
4. regularity of margins, spacing, and indentations,
5. accuracy of typing,
6. correctness of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

### STATIONERY

Since the character of a house is often inferred from the quality of paper it uses for its correspondence, stationery is to be selected with care. The standard of usage is a white medium-weight bond. Other stocks are usually satisfactory if they have:

1. a firm texture to reduce the danger of crumpling or tearing when handled,
2. a body which makes the paper feel substantial and durable, more or less like a bank note,
3. a finish which will permit clear-cut typing,
4. a color which will not offend the reader's taste.

Unusual weight and finish are used by many firms to make their letters distinctive. Since the cost of paper is only a small fraction of the total cost of the letter, being only one-half, six-tenths, or two-thirds of a cent, as various paper companies advertise, it is usually unwise economy to sacrifice the advantage which a good quality of stationery may gain.

**Size of Sheet.**—The 8½ x 11 letter sheet, although long considered standard and still used by the majority of business firms for the everyday letter, has many competitors. A 7½ x 10½ sheet, called a "two-fold" sheet, is used very

commonly for sales letters. On it the typed space is narrow, like that of a magazine column. The half sheet,  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ , once in favor for short letters, is now almost exclusively for intrahouse and interplant correspondence. The note sheet, which is half standard size and which opens like a book, is widely used by business men as personal stationery and by publishing houses for everyday letters. The note sheet in book form, the  $7 \times 10$ , the  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ , and the  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  are used extensively for sales letters. Here the message, or letter proper, is usually written on the first page and acts as an ambassador for the printed material occupying the second and third, and sometimes the fourth, pages. The legal size,  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ , is sometimes used where it is desirable to put a long letter on a single sheet.

For the sake of distinctiveness, almost every conceivable variation from the standard may be employed in business letters. Stationery of any size seems justifiable so long as it is attractive, economical, and appropriate to the business, the product, and the reader.

**Color.**—While most firms use a standard white paper, many employ colors in an effort to give their letters a definite personality. Usage has especially sanctioned the delicate or neutral tints, although intense colors are often employed to indicate departments or for other purposes. Whatever the tint, the typing should be in a color which contrasts with it enough to be easily read.

### ELEMENTS OF THE LETTER

**Letterhead.**—Although the term letterhead is often used as synonymous with stationery, to mean the sheet of paper on which a business letter is written, it is more precisely used to refer to the printed or engraved matter at the head of the sheet. The purpose of a letterhead is to supply the recipient of the letter with necessary information about the firm which sends it, and to act as the firm's representative.

*Elements.* It usually indicates the nature of the business. It should enable the reader to address his reply correctly, i.e., it should show the name and address of the firm, including street and number. The United States Postal Guide gives these directions:

The practise of some business concerns of omitting street numbers, etc.,—from their stationery and advertisements, results in increasing the volume of insufficiently addressed mail. The Department urgently requests the public to exercise the greatest possible care to see that mail is sufficiently and correctly addressed, in order to secure its prompt and certain delivery.

Other details included in the letterhead vary with the nature of the firm. The firm's telephone number, cable address, and trade-mark are additional elements which are usually included. Less common, and wholly dependent on the appropriateness to the nature of the firm, are: illustrated lists of products, names of officers, locations of branch houses, and such instructions to readers as: In replying please quote initials O. R. V.; Address all communications to the company; Quotations subject to change without notice.

To make the letterhead representative of the character of the firm, the following matters must be considered: the layout of the elements of the letterhead; the kinds of impression (engraving, lithographing, embossing, die-stamping, or printing); pictures of products; color; kinds of type-faces; etc.

The space occupied by the letterhead is proportionate to the length of the letter sheet. In general, the letterhead occupies no more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches of an  $11\frac{1}{2}$ -inch sheet, as the text of the letter should predominate. Letterheads which occupy more than one-fifth of the sheet almost inevitably look top-heavy. The use of too much material in the letterhead is the most frequent cause of a poor appearance. The present tendency is to make letterheads dignified business cards instead of handbill advertisements. Advertising slogans,

pictures of buildings and products, lists of products, etc., belong to the circular letter used in special campaigns rather than to the everyday letter of a firm.

*Arrangement.* The limiting of the matter to such necessary elements as name of the firm, business address (including street and number), and trade-mark, makes it possible to arrange this material into a well-shaped mass of type. There are many different masses of type which may be used, dependent on the subject matter. The six named and illustrated below are common:<sup>1</sup>



FIG. 1.—Top or Diamond.



FIG. 2.—Inverted Pyramid.

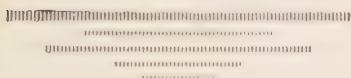


FIG. 3.—Small Top Under Line.

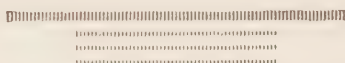


FIG. 4.—Small Panel Below Main Display.



FIG. 5.—Double Pyramid.



FIG. 6.—Regulation Panel.

*Color.* In producing effective letterheads, color as well as the arrangement of type, has an important part. For example, an impression of dignity and simplicity is created by having a pleasing form of black or gray type against a clear background of white. The names of officers, branch offices, cable address, and telephone number, are made in light tones in order to interfere little with the white effect of the background surrounding the main part of the heading. Color is often introduced to illuminate and individualize a letterhead. In the past, red has been the color most frequently used in trade-marks, small emblems, or orna-

<sup>1</sup> Illustrations are reproduced by the permission of the Parson's Paper Company.

ments of letterheads. Other off-black colors, such as green, terra cotta, and orange are much used in die-stamped headings. Orange is perhaps the color now preferred by printers. The proportion of such color to the black of the heading is always kept low, to avoid undue "loudness."

*Kinds of Type-Faces.* In addition to lithographing, a firm may have recourse to unusual type-faces to make its letterhead distinctive. It is well to remember, however, that conservative forms suggest dignity and dependability, while freakish or eccentric forms arouse more or less suspicion. Engraved or embossed letterheads generally bespeak reliability and success, and appeal to those who appreciate luxury. The generous use of white space, the careful selection of size and style of type, good taste in pictures, in cuts and in methods of impression are signs of superiority; while the use of too large or too many styles of type, or of large blocks of small type, or the lavish spread of colors suggests bad taste and is offensive to the discriminating reader. In designing artistic, appropriate, and effective letterheads, it is always wise to turn to the expert service of printers and engravers.

### Typed Heading.

*Elements.* When a plain sheet of paper (without a printed letterhead) is used, certain considerations apply to the typing of the heading. The elements of the heading are the mailing address (including street and number) of the writer of the letter, and the date of the writing of the letter. (The subject heading is used by some firms as a part of the heading; by others as a part of the body.) The details of the mailing address, in the order of the most specific to the most inclusive, are: room number or building, street address or a post office box number, city, state, and, in case of international correspondence, the name of the country.

Usage decrees that these details be given in either two or three lines, according to the length of the address, with the lines either blocked or indented. The following forms illustrate:



Vallejo, California,  
December 1, 1924.

69 Roscoe St., Chicago, Ill.,  
July 24, 1924.

1910 Ogden Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois  
May 20, 1924

69 Roscoe St., Chicago, Ill.,  
July 24, 1924.

1910 Ogden Ave.  
Chicago, Illinois  
May 20, 1924

The first line usually ends at the margin. The other lines may be aligned with it (block form), or may be indented increasing amounts (pyramid form). The following date forms are sometimes used for variety:

March  
Fifth  
1924

December  
Twentieth  
1924

*Position.* The heading is usually typed in the upper right-hand corner of the sheet, at least one inch from the top, to the right of the middle, and not extending beyond the right-hand margin of the letter. The heading may, however, occupy the middle of the page, one or more inches from the top, the distance depending on the length of the letter. It may even occupy the left-hand side, but in this position it is likely to destroy the balance of the parts of the letter on the sheet.

The name of the city and the name of the state should always be separated by a comma. A comma is also placed at the end of each line except the last, which is followed by a period. In the date of writing, a comma is placed after the day of the month, and a period after the year. Open punctuation, however, as shown in the last two of the above examples, is growing in favor.

*Abbreviations.* Certain words should always be written in full, such as names of streets, cities, numbered streets, and avenues up to and including ten. Other words may be abbreviated: Street to St.; Avenue to Ave.; the names of the

states to forms found in the U. S. Postal Guide; and names of the months to Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., . . . . Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Numbered streets above ten are indicated as follows: 33rd Street, 55th Avenue, etc. Figures are used for the days of the month, as May 10, 1924. The form of the date of the writing of the letter should not be 5/30/22 or 5-30-'22. The number of the day of the month in the heading should not be followed by d, nd, rd, st, or th.

*Position of the Date.* The date is placed usually in the upper right-hand corner, two or three spaces below the last line of the printed or typed letterhead. Many leading firms, however, in their standardized letter forms do not follow this practice. Although it is almost invariably typed instead of printed and cannot, therefore, be considered a part of the letterhead, they place it on the same line and immediately to the right of the address in the letterhead. Sometimes it appears in the lower left-hand corner immediately below the initials of the dictator and the stenographer.

..... THE STANLEY WORKS .....

..... Trade .....  
Mark

.....  
New Britain, Conn., U. S. A., February 3, 1921.

**Inside Address.**—The name and address of the person to whom the letter is sent is usually written above the salutation and serves one or more of the following purposes: to get a letter to its destination in case the envelope address is destroyed or the letter has been placed in the wrong envelope, to supply information for use in addressing the envelope, to put the name on the carbon copy which is retained in filing, to supply address in window envelopes, and to secure the personal touch which is desired in modern business letters. Its parts are: the name, title, and address. The order of details, as in the heading, is from the most specific to the most general: name and title of person, num-

ber of street, or post office box number, city, and state. The practice of omitting street and number from the inside address, heading, and envelope address is definitely discouraged by postal authorities.

*Position.* The inside address usually appears just above the salutation, but it is sometimes placed at the lower left-hand corner. Its absence from the usual place may make the letter more formal or more personal, depending upon the nature of the salutation. Such salutations as Sir, My dear Sir, or My dear Madam, when not preceded by a name and address, look extremely formal; while such a one as Dear Johnston, similarly isolated, appears very personal. If the inside address is put at the lower left-hand corner of the letter page, it is dropped at least one space, and usually two below the level of the signature. In this position it may help to give the letter a balanced appearance. If it is placed above the salutation, its distance below the heading depends upon the amount of space which the body of the letter is to occupy. Even in a long letter, it should never be less than two spaces below the heading, as all appearance of crowding is to be avoided.

*Form.* The number of lines used in the address depends upon the amount of detail which is included. Usage does not sanction less than two lines. Single spacing between the lines is customary, but the length of the letter may determine that double spacing will make for better letter display. The first line always begins flush with the margin, which should never be less than three-fourths of an inch wide. The second and third lines are indented, or stepped in, from five to ten spaces, by some firms; they begin flush with the margin in the letters of other firms, so that the whole address forms a block. The former is the old while the latter is the new practice. In any case, no line should extend beyond the middle of the page. The following examples show the most common variations in spacing and alignment of the inside address. End-punctuation, shown only in the last two examples, may be used with any of these forms:

The Norton Company  
Worcester, Mass.

The Norton Company  
Worcester, Mass.

Lord and Taylor  
Fifth Avenue and 38th Street  
New York, New York

Lord and Taylor  
Fifth Avenue and 38th Street  
New York, New York

Mr. James R. Ferguson  
The Curtis Company  
25 Jones Street  
Newark, N. J.

Mr. James R. Ferguson  
The Curtis Company  
25 Jones Street  
Newark, N. J.

Mr. A. B. Jones,  
Director of Publicity,  
Crowell Manufacturing Company,  
1400 North Michigan Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Mr. A. B. Jones,  
Director of Publicity,  
Crowell Manufacturing Company,  
1400 North Michigan Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

The form of the address should be exactly that used in the heading of letters of the firm addressed, with no omission whatever, not even in marks of punctuation. If *The* is a part of the firm name, such as: The National City Bank of New York, The Stanley Works, etc., *The* should never be omitted. If the firm has Co., Company, or Inc. as a part of the firm name, the inside address must copy these forms. Abbreviations are not used if they are not a part of the official name.

*Punctuation.* If end-punctuation is used for the inside address, a comma is placed at the end of each line, except the last line, which is followed by a period. Many firms, however, leave all these lines open, on the ground that punctuation is meaningless here. An abbreviation standing at the end of such a line needs, of course, to be marked by a period, whether a comma follows or not.

**Special Address.**—Routine letters are usually addressed to the company rather than to an individual. If, however, the writer wants his letter to reach an individual and hence secure a personal contact, he may insert the special address. It may take one of many positions, as shown in the following examples:

1.

The John Doe Company,  
130 Michigan Street,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Attention: Mr. John Doe, President.

Gentlemen:

2.

The John Doe Company,  
130 Michigan Street,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Gentlemen: Attention of Mr. John Doe, President.

3.

The John Doe Company,  
130 Michigan Street,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Attention of Mr. John Doe, President.

Gentlemen:

4.

The John Doe Company,  
130 Michigan Street,  
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Attention of Mr. John Doe, President.

Gentlemen:

## 5.

L. F. Grammes & Sons  
Allentown, Pa.

Mr. H. A. Grammes—Please

Gentlemen:

If the name of the person to whom the letter is directed is unknown, he may be designated by his official title.

L. F. Grammes & Sons  
Allentown, Pa.

Attention of Purchasing Agent

Gentlemen:

In business letter practice, it is becoming customary to follow the name by the title or the official position written in full, such as Superintendent, Manager, Treasurer, etc. For example:

Dr. John R. Brown, Secretary  
Mr. William R. Thomas, President

If the official title is long, it should occupy a second line.

Mr. John J. Wertenberg,  
Director of Publicity,  
People's Gas Company,  
Chicago, Illinois.

**Salutation.**—The salutation, or greeting, of the business letter corresponds to the "How do you do?" of a personal meeting. It should be that which expresses the degree of intimacy existing between the writer and the person addressed. A few business firms omit the salutation, but the practice is objected to on the grounds that it suggests lack of ordinary courtesy. Many form letters have devised



slogans as phrases to catch attention, which occupy the space usually taken by inside address and salutation.

Arranged in the order of decreasing formality, the proper salutations for men are:

Sir, My dear Sir, Dear Sir, My dear Mr. Blank, Dear Mr. Blank, My dear Blank, Dear Blank, My dear James, and Dear James.

Arranged in the same order for women, they are:

Madam, My dear Madam, Dear Madam, My dear Mrs. Brown, Dear Mrs. Brown, and Dear Janet.

*Gentlemen* is the form of salutation invariably used when the letter is addressed to a company composed of men, to a post office box number, or to a committee; and *Mesdames* for a company composed of women. As a substitute for *Mesdames*, *Ladies* is gaining favor. *Dear Sir* and *Dear Madam*, forms representing a medium degree of formality, are those most commonly used in business. The tendency, however, is to use less formal greetings as soon as there has been an exchange of letters between two individuals. It is in keeping with the movement to personalize business letters.

The first word of the salutation is always capitalized. *Dear* is capitalized only when used as the first word of the salutation. A colon is invariably used after the salutation. Authorities differ as to the use of the dash accompanying it. The comma is used in letters of friendship only. The semicolon is not permissible.

The correspondence of unprogressive firms shows such forms as: Dear Friend, My dear Friend, Dear Sirs, Dear Miss, Mr. Stephens, D'r., Gent's, and S'r.

**Body of the Letter.**—Proper placement of the body of the letter on the sheet contributes to the attractive appearance of the whole, and makes for ease in reading. The typist is concerned, therefore, with the length of the letter,

the margins, the spacing, the indentations, and the style of type.

From the amount of material in his notebook or on the cylinder of the dictating machine, he can estimate the amount of space which this material will occupy. Long ago the Greeks discovered that the golden oblong is a form pleasing to the eye; today the typist casts the body of the letter in this form unless it does not enable him to keep the proportions similar to those of the sheet. To secure symmetry, he places his material so that it is centered a little above the mathematical center of the page and so that it will give an impression of balance and proportion. The margins at the top and at the bottom of the sheet should be greater than those at the sides, and the side margins should be at least one inch. The body of the letter on its left-hand side is in alignment with the first line of the inside address and with the salutation.

The text of the letter is generally single-spaced, with double spacing between the various parts, or even triple spacing. In short letters of less than two hundred words, double spacing is often employed. If, however, it is used in letters of greater length, two or more sheets become necessary; the expense of the letter is thereby increased, and the letter loses the advantage of being read at a single sweep of the eye.

The matter of paragraph indenting has occupied more attention than the subject warrants. Those who favor beginning paragraphs flush with the margin and indicating paragraph units by leaving double spaces between them, advance these arguments for the block form (illustrated on pages 66-68):

1. It saves the time of the typist.
2. It presents a more precise and dignified-looking letter.
3. Its newness suggests progressiveness.

Those who indicate paragraphs by indentions of five to ten spaces give the following reasons:

1. Paragraph indention follows the conventional usage to which we are accustomed in books, magazines, newspapers, etc.
2. The indention gives the eye and mind an opportunity to pause before a change of thought, and hence accentuates the change of thought.
3. It is more dignified and conservative than the block form.
4. It makes the left-hand margin of the letter similar in appearance to the right-hand margin, which is always more or less broken.

Many firms, even though they indicate paragraph divisions by indention, give definite instructions to typists to block the heading, introductory address, salutation, and even the complimentary close and signature.

“Hanging” paragraphs are yet a novelty. This form is produced by beginning the first line at the margin and indenting the succeeding lines five spaces as illustrated on pages 70-71. It serves to draw attention to the opening words of the paragraph and to subordinate the material which develops the paragraph theme.

To display the body of the letter to the best advantage, the typist should avoid such bad practices as the following:

1. Crowding the bottom of the page.
2. Crowding the margins, either by disregarding marginal stops or by filling the margins with extraneous material for emphasis.
3. Undue irregularity in the length of the lines, resulting in a jagged appearance at the right-hand margin.
4. Improper dividing of words at the ends of the lines, without regard for syllabication.
5. Indenting one paragraph more or less than another.
6. Inconsistent employment of the blocked or indented form.
7. Inconsistent spacing between lines or between paragraphs.

8. Using two or more incongruous styles of type.
9. Making erasures and strike-overs.
10. Smudging the paper by using a ribbon not suited to the paper.
11. Poor impression due to unclean type or irregular touch.

**Complimentary Close.**—The complimentary close of letters corresponds to the phrases Good-bye and Good-day of the personal parting and serves to create the final impression. It is a customary courtesy, noticeable only when it is omitted or when it is eccentric.

*Usual Forms.* The usual forms in commercial correspondence are:

|                                                                            |                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Impersonal and hence<br>used more frequently than<br>other forms of close. | Yours truly,<br>Yours very truly,<br>Very truly yours, |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friendly and hence used<br>to indicate a personal re-<br>lation to the person ad-<br>dressed. | Yours sincerely,<br>Sincerely yours,<br>Cordially,<br>Cordially yours,<br>Yours cordially,<br>Faithfully yours,<br>Yours faithfully,<br>Earnestly yours, |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                 |                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Formal and hence used<br>only when addressing ex-<br>ecutives superior in rank. | Respectfully,<br>Yours respectfully,<br>Respectfully yours, |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                      |                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Novel closes used in spe-<br>cial cases such as in col-<br>lection effort and sales. | Persistently yours,<br>Yours for progress,<br>Yours for more profits,<br>Yours with appreciation, |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The principles used in selecting a close are:

1. That it shall be consistent with the intimacy justifiable by the relation of the writer to the reader.

2. That it shall be consistent with the salutation. For example: *Yours cordially* is far from consistent with the salutation, *Dear Sir*.
3. That it shall be appropriate to the tone and the idea of the body of the letter.
4. That, if at all novel, it shall be in good taste.

*Objectionable Forms.* *Yours* as a complimentary close, is curt. *Y'rs* and *Resp'y* show haste and are discourteous. *Respectively* is not to be used for *Respectfully*.

*And oblige, I beg to remain, I am, Believe me, and Hoping to hear from you soon, I beg to remain,* whether a part of the complimentary close or of the last line of the letter, are considered old-fashioned.

*Position.* The first word of the complimentary close usually begins to the right of the center of the page and two spaces below the body of the letter. The close should never violate the margin at the right. Letters which show the complimentary close at the left-hand margin are infrequent. This position is sometimes justified on the grounds of economy in typing, and novelty; but it is to be condemned if it gives the letter an overbalanced appearance.

*Signature.* The signature, besides being a customary part of the letter, indicates where to place the legal responsibility for whatever statements are made in the letter, and how to address the answer if one is desired. Its elements are: the name of the writer, his official position or department, and the name of the firm which he represents. It is usually placed two spaces below the complimentary close and about two spaces to the right, or on the same margin.

*Responsibility.* The degree of the signer's responsibility is indicated by the form of the signature. The signer is individually responsible if his signature stands above the name of his firm.

(Signed) J. Alden  
Sales Manager  
JAVA COFFEE COMPANY

The responsibility rests on the firm if the order is reversed.

JAVA COFFEE COMPANY

(Signed) J. Alden  
Sales Manager

*Current Practices.* Routine correspondence may be signed by the typewritten name of the firm followed by the initials of the writer in ink.

THE ROYCROFTERS

J. A. M. (Signed)

The writer who has no official title but desires to show his relation to the firm, prefixes to his signature *by* in preference to *per*.

CIRCLE A PRODUCTS CO.

by Julia Olsen (Signed)

He may, if he has no official title, give the name of the department to which he belongs:

THE COMMERCIAL POSTER COMPANY

A. R. McCandlich (Signed)

Advertising Department

The best practice requires that the dictator's name be signed with a pen. The custom of typing his name immediately below his signature was introduced by the war and has grown in favor, since few people write their names legibly. The typed name, instead of the writer's initials, often appears at the left of the sheet directly opposite the last line of the signature.

Cordially yours,

Associated Advertising Clubs,

(Signed) Lou E. Holland

Lou E. Holland, President.

There is no necessity for typing a signature, of course, if the writer's name appears in the letterhead.



It is the practice of most firms to place the initials of the writer followed by the initials of the stenographer at the left of the sheet directly opposite the last line of the signature. Enclosures are indicated below these initials:

Yours very truly,

The Stanley Works.

(Signed) H. A. Preston

Correspondence Supervisor.

HAP:AH  
Enclosure.

Most companies employ the plural pronoun We indicating the company, as We are glad to learn . . . , We are sending . . . , instead of the singular pronoun I. Letters are written in the first person singular when an official of the company wishes to make his letters suggest more personal consideration on his part. In this case he usually signs his name and indicates his title above the firm name.

It is customary for women, whose signatures do not indicate whether or not they are married, to indicate their status thus:

1. Mary Jane Lee  
(Mrs. E. H. Lee)
2. (Miss) Marie Johnson

### *Objectionable Practice.*

Indication of the place for a signature by a dotted line.

Illegible handwriting.

Extension of name beyond the right-hand margin.

Use of a rubber stamp to sign letters.

Employment of phrases showing that the writer did not see the letter after it was transcribed, such as "Dictated but not read."

The prefixing of titles to the name, except Miss or Mrs.

Use of per for by.

Crowding of the signature to the bottom of the page.

Variations of signature, as A. B. Jones, Arthur B. Jones, etc.

## STANDARD LETTER FORMS

Many firms, in the interest of salesmanship and economy, have adopted a set of standard forms for their several types of correspondence. If a standard letter form makes a good impression, it is worthy of repetition, and its habitual use stamps the firm's letters with a distinct personality and carries the impression that its correspondence is well ordered. This in turn suggests reliability.

The adoption of standard forms devised by an executive who has made a special study of the various functions of the firm's correspondence prevents the necessity of each dictator having to think out the form best adapted to a given person and a given subject. Typists, when once they have mastered given forms, gain considerable speed in executing their work, save time, and hence money.

The objections offered to the standardization of letter forms are that the dictator often finds that the demands of the subject matter of a given letter are hard to adapt to a fixed form, and that he is often handicapped in his efforts to suit his letters to different classes of readers.

The following standardized letter forms are representative of the correspondence of several nationally known firms.

## Indented Form.

THE NATIONAL CITY BANK  
of New York

*New York, March 4, 1920.*

IN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE INITIALS GEG

To the Heads of Departments,  
The National City Bank of New York,  
55 Wall Street, New York City.

Gentlemen:

This is the standard form to be used for writing single-page letters of long form.

The address should begin one and one-quarter inches (eight single spaces) below the lowest line of printing on the letterhead. Some slight departures from this rule may be required in very short letters, but the aim must always be proportion and harmony.

The left margin of all letters of such length as this should be one and one-quarter inches (fifteen spaces) wide, the lines being carried over to an even margin of the same width on the right of the sheet.

Paragraphs should be indented ten spaces from the left-hand margins. The second and third lines of the signature should each be indented five spaces in conformity with the indentation of the address at the beginning. The three lines of the complimentary close and the signature should be arranged so that the line, THE NATIONAL CITY BANK OF NEW YORK, will end even with the margin on the right.

The title of an officer who is to sign a letter, such as Vice-President, Assistant Cashier, etc., should not be written entirely in capitals.

Very truly yours,

THE NATIONAL CITY BANK OF NEW YORK

P. P.

Block Form.

WILSON & Co.

CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Apr. 2, 1920

Wilson & Co.,  
41st Street and Ashland Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Attention All Departments

Gentlemen:

It is our desire that all correspondence leaving this office and the offices of our other plants be uniform in

arrangement. To accomplish this we have asked all stenographers to follow the outline of this letter, and the general instructions which follow:

The date should be placed exactly as shown above. With the exception of May, June, and July, the name of the month should be abbreviated.

Begin addressing the person or company written to, seven spaces below date. The address will require three or four lines, always three. If no street address is known, write the name of the town on the second line of address, and the name of the state on the third line.

Do not indent the first line of paragraphs. Single space all letters; double space between paragraphs.

The length of the letter will govern the width of the margins. The shorter the letter the wider the margins should be. The margin on the right should at all times as nearly as possible equal the margin on the left.

Yours very truly,

WILSON & CO.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE SUPERVISION

UNITED MOTORS SERVICE  
INCORPORATED  
782 Woodward Ave.

DETROIT

FORM LETTER NO. 1

SUBJECT

Aug. 15, 1919.

The John Doe Company,  
137 Congress Street,  
Detroit, Michigan.

ATTENTION: MR. JOHN DOE, PRESIDENT.

Gentlemen:—

When writing to a company, make use of this form of greeting. If it is not desired to bring your letter to

a certain individual's attention, simply omit that part of the heading.

If you are writing to a certain person of the company, use the salutation, "Dear Sir." The man's name, followed in most cases by his title will then be written above the company name in the heading.

Place your subject in the upper left-hand corner. Limit this to one or two words, just enough to serve as a file reference or a hint as to what the subject is.

In closing, use the complimentary expression "Very truly yours," followed by the firm name, and title of the dictator. Note the ending of this letter, especially as to the position on the page. Use this as a model for your letter.

Very truly yours,

UNITED MOTORS SERVICE.

T. S. P. GRIFFIN

E18-P36

Correspondence Counsel.

"QUALITY—SERVICE"

MIDDLETOWN, OHIO.

March 7, 1921

From:        Sherman Perry, Correspondence Adviser  
To:         Stenographers and Typists  
Subject:     Form of Interplant Letters

Interplant letters are written on a special form. The type signature of the correspondent is always at the top of the letter after From; therefore a type signature

at the end is unnecessary. The salutation and complimentary close are omitted.

Like other letters, the interplant letters should be easy to read. Notice the difference between a jumbled arrangement of items and one that is tabulated.

Hard to read:

If you will look at this customer's orders you will find that there are 66 sheets still due against their C1942, our 1047-98 B, 82 sheets still due against their C1944, our 1047-100 B, 165 sheets due against their B1945, our 1047-101, and on their C1946, our 1047-102 B, there are still 49 sheets due.

Easy to read:

You will find that there are still due against:

|        |                |           |
|--------|----------------|-----------|
| C 1942 | Our 1047- 98 B | 66 sheets |
| C 1944 | " 1047-100 B   | 82 "      |
| C 1945 | " 1047-101     | 165 "     |
| C 1946 | " 1047-102 B   | 49 "      |

Remember that the form of the interplant letter is important. See that it has an atmosphere of quality, the same as outside letters.

(Signed) SHERMAN PERRY.

SP BB

Mixed Form.

L. F. GRAMMES & SONS

Allentown, Pa., U. S. A.

Mr. George Jones,  
Jonestown, Pa.

Dear Sir:

No matter how forcible the argument in a letter,—the impression of the house is not any too favorable on a business man, when the letter is written and displayed carelessly.



The margin of a letter must be gauged by the quantity of matter. A letter of this size must be no wider than five inches.

I value an equally wide margin on all sides rather than a stretch across the sheet because white adds strength and attention; its absence detracts from the appearance of the letter.

Another rule: cut your paragraphs short when possible. It improves the appearance of the letter and makes it read more easily and quickly.

The busy man will not wade through a long-paragraphed letter until a more "opportune" time. That time often never comes, because long paragraphs tire and are somewhat repulsive.

As to display, this letter is a fair example of what I mean.

Cleanliness in letters is much sought after. I admire the letter minus the marks of the eraser or struck-on-top corrections, etc.

All of us are busy but part of your business should be in the following of my letter wishes.

Yours truly,

L. F. GRAMMES & SONS,  
(Personal Signature)

THE STANLEY WORKS  
NEW BRITAIN, CONN., U.S.A.

February 3, 1921.

The Carnegie Steel Company,  
Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania.

Gentlemen:           Attention of Mr. C. L. Woods.

Yours of February 1  
Sample of Letter Form

Often we desire to mark a letter for the attention of an individual using his name instead of his initials only.

Such a case is shown at the opening of this letter. When the words *Attention of Mr. C. L. Woods* are dictated, they are placed on the line with *Gentlemen*, but four points to the right of the colon. In other words, after a stenographer has written *Gentlemen* she spaces four times and begins to write *Attention of*.

The word *Gentlemen* should appear on every letter that we write to concerns outside of The Stanley Works family. In corresponding with our branch offices, however, we omit the salutation *Gentlemen* and move *Attention of* into its place, flush with the margin.

If we desire to give a man's title, we write it in one of the following ways:

Attention of Mr. C. A. Jewett,  
Vice President

Attention of Mr. C. L. Woods,  
Ass't Gen'l Manager of Sales

You will see that the usual form is to begin the writing of the title directly beneath *Mr.*; but when it is very long, you may start directly under the *A* in *Attention*.

Very truly yours,

THE STANLEY WORKS.

HPA:AH

Correspondence Supervisor

## Hanging Indention

L. F. GRAMMES & SONS

Allentown, Pa., U.S.A.

Mr. George Jones,  
304 N. Fifth St.,  
Jonestown, Pa.

Dear Sir:

No matter how forcible the arguments in a letter,—the impression of the house is not any too favorable to a

business man, when the letter is written and displayed carelessly.

The margin of a letter must be gauged by the quantity of matter. A letter of this size must be no wider than  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

I value an equally wide margin on all sides of a letter, rather than a stretch across the sheet because white adds strength and attention; its absence detracts.

Another rule: cut your paragraphs short when possible. It improves the appearance of the letter and makes it read more easily and quickly.

The busy man will not wade through a long-paragraphed letter, until a more "opportune" time. That time often never comes, because long paragraphs tire and are somewhat repulsive.

Cleanliness in letters is much sought. I admire the letter minus the marks of the eraser or struck-on-top corrections, etc.

All of us are busy but part of your business might well be in following my letter wishes.

Yours truly,

L. F. GRAMMES & SONS,  
(Personal Signature)

### MISCELLANEOUS POINTS

Postscripts are sometimes added to business letters to convey a message to which it is desirable to direct particular attention. Progressive firms no longer regard this message as an after-thought, nor does it need to be marked by a P. S. Unnecessary material outside of the body of the letter is generally to be avoided as it is distracting to the reader.

Facts useful to the writer only, such as reference numbers for filing, stenographers' initials, and enclosures, should

be placed in the lower left-hand corner of the letter, since customary arrangements of the parts of a letter have made it the least conspicuous position. The upper right-hand corner is a conspicuous position and hence is a more satisfactory position for such phrases as, *in replying, please refer to AAK*, which are intended to catch the attention of the reader. They should not, however, be so prominent as to detract from the letter itself.

### ENVELOPE ADDRESS

The address on the envelope should, of course, always be correct, complete, and easily readable, to facilitate the handling of mail. The following quotation is from a paper read before a meeting of the Direct Mail Advertising Association:

More than 20,000,000 letters reach the dead letter office each year because they are so incorrectly and improperly addressed that they cannot be delivered to the addressee nor returned to the sender.

These letters last year contained checks, money orders, and currency of the face value of more than a million dollars. But that is not all. The losses to business men because of failure to address these letters properly must be incalculable.

The U. S. Post Office classifies as unmailable all matter illegibly, incorrectly, or insufficiently addressed.

**Position.**—The address is placed slightly below the middle of the envelope, and it should be well centered. Special data required in the envelope address, such as: Attention Mr. Blank, Please Forward, Special Service Department, General Delivery, Personal, and Advertising Department, may be placed in the lower left-hand corner.

**Form.**—Either the block or the inverted pyramid form, corresponding to the inside address, may be used in giving the details of name, street address, or box number, city or town (sometimes county), state, and country. The form should be such as presents the maximum in attractiveness and clearness. Though the inside address is often single

spaced, the envelope address is usually double spaced for greater readability. The following forms are now standard:

After ——— days return to  
H. C. Fox,  
86 Clark St.,  
Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Charles W. Santes, President,  
The Jones, Miller, Proctor Company,  
1224 West James Street,  
Lincoln, Nebraska.

After ——— days return to  
H. C. Fox,  
86 Clark St.,  
Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Charles W. Santes, President,  
The Jones, Miller, Proctor Company,  
1224 West James Street,  
Lincoln, Nebraska.

#### OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Business men have occasion to write letters which, while they are not included in the regular routine in letters, are of a business nature. If they are addressed to government officials, members of Congress, city officials, etc., every detail which gives formality—titles given in full, absence of abbreviations, dignified language, impersonal tone, formal salutation, and complimentary close—is punctiliously observed. The inside address is usually placed in the lower left-hand corner. If it is desired to make the official correspondence informal, an informal salutation, complimentary close, and tone are employed. The stationery of official correspondence is usually of folder form and less

than  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ . The elements of the letterhead are reduced to a minimum: name, official business, and the address of the sender.

#### SHEETS AFTER THE FIRST

When two or more sheets are used for one letter, the second, third, etc., are of the same quality and size as the first sheet, but they do not have a letterhead nor an introductory address. They have such matter as is necessary to identify all of the sheets as belonging to the same letter: name or initials of the addressee, the date, and the number of the page. For example:

Mr. T. H. McN., Mar. 10, 1924, No. 2.  
or Mr. Joseph W. Smith, 2, Mar. 10, 1924.

To avoid crowding it is often well to use two sheets for a letter that more than comfortably fills one sheet. Though there are only a few lines to be put on the second sheet, the writing begins about two inches from the top, and margins are maintained uniform with those of the first sheet. A second sheet should not be used, however, if there is not enough material to make more than two lines before the complimentary close.

#### FOLDING

The method of folding a letter depends upon the style of envelope used to carry it. The principles governing the choice of envelopes and the insertion of the letter are: (1) convenience to the recipient in extracting and unfolding the letter, (2) effectiveness of display of material to be read, (3) economy of time and effort in the assembling of the letters for mailing. Efficiency requires the fewest possible movements, both on the part of the sender and on the part of the receiver, and is not to be sacrificed except in the interest of greater effectiveness. Unusual methods of folding are unjustifiable if they irritate the reader or in any way interfere with the communication of the message.



## PART II

THE BUSINESS LETTER WITH SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THE LETTER  
THAT SELLS



## CHAPTER V

### SELLING QUALITIES OF THE BUSINESS LETTER

- A. Every Letter a Sales Letter.
- B. Why Every Letter Should Be a Sales Letter.
- C. Definition of Salesmanship.
- D. An Effective Beginning.
- E. A Message of Importance to the Reader.
- F. The Power of Suggestion.
- G. Your Attitude.
- H. Adaptation.
- I. Personalization.
- J. Right Tone.
- K. Quality of the Proof.
- L. Good Endings.

**Every Letter a Sales Letter.**—Every letter a sales letter is one of the subjects most frequently discussed in magazines on commercial correspondence and in correspondence manuals of progressive firms. There are at least four good reasons for this:

1. Correspondents and executives generally appreciate the value of sales letters in the conduct of business.
2. All letters in business, except those of business information, are written to influence thought, feeling, or action; hence virtually all business letters are sales letters.
3. All good business letters accomplish results by the same method as the sales letter.
4. The routine, credit, adjustment, and collection letters of most firms do not leave so good an impression upon customers as do sales letters (used in the narrow sense of the word).

So much at variance, for example, are the following paragraphs of a sales and of an adjustment letter from

the same firm that it is difficult to believe they represent the same firm. The good-will built by the first letter was most certainly counteracted by the offense given by the second.

### *Letter I*

Dear Sir:

We are glad and proud to have your patronage and are grateful for it.

Every article purchased from us is guaranteed to be as represented in this letter. To protect you further, we ask, if you ever find the goods you buy are not up to our description and to your expectation, that you send them back. We shall refund your money or credit you, whichever you prefer. Moreover, we shall pay transportation expenses both ways.

Very truly yours,

### *Letter II*

Dear Sir:

Your reply to our letter of April 26 in which we asked you to return invoices or other evidence that we shipped you merchandise to the amount of \$5.00 on your alleged order of December, 1924, in which you state you sent \$25 in currency, is certainly devoid of any convincing evidence that you ever placed such an order with us. In fact, we are very much inclined to doubt the fact that you ever had \$25.00 all at one time. If you did have, you surely would have more sense than to send it in the form of currency through the mail.

We do not consider your letters of any literary value; so it would be just as well for you to cease writing us about this matter and give us a little time to take care of our regular customers.

Very truly yours,

**Why Every Letter Should Be a Sales Letter.**—The reason for making routine letters business building seems obvious. Routine letters far outnumber sales letters; hence they have more opportunities to create favorable impression. They are more important than sales letters because they go to customers who are already favorably disposed toward a firm; while a large majority of sales letters go to prospects who may or may not read them because of indifference. The constructive routine letter, moreover, requires but little more effort to write and costs no more than the non-constructive.

**Definition of Salesmanship.**—Salesmanship is the power to present messages persuasively. One seeking skill as a correspondent cannot too early focus his attention on some of the important selling qualities applicable to all types of business letters. The difficulty here is to select a few on which to place special emphasis, since whether or not all business-building qualities are selling qualities is a matter of focus. Everything that makes a favorable impression may be called a selling quality.

**An Effective Beginning.**—An effective start to a letter puts the recipient in a pleasant frame of mind. It does not create antagonism as did these openings: "Let us help you to make your home beautiful," "We were surprised that you misunderstood our letter of the tenth."

"We are glad," and "We take pleasure" are attempts to cause a favorable mood in the mind of the reader, but are to be tabooed because they have become commonplace. Hence, they are weak and create unfavorable attention.

Beginnings of adjustment and of collection letters, especially, must produce the right emotional reaction in the reader in order to secure a dispassionate consideration of the message; consequently, they should usually consist of statements agreeing with him in some respect:

As much as we should like to comply at once with your request, it is necessary to ask you to give us some information first.

We can appreciate how you feel, Mr. Garmon, when you again hear from us without receiving a settlement, but it is impossible for us to take any further action in the matter without your help.

Openings are called negative, neutral, or positive according to the emotional reaction they will likely produce when read. The negative disappoints the reader, the neutral keeps him uncertain, and the positive pleases him.

The effect of each type of opening may be judged from these three sentences:

Negative—We regret to note that you desire to cancel your order on account of advanced prices.

Neutral—We have received your request to cancel your order.

Positive—We are glad to cancel your order since it suits you best for us to cancel it.

In addition to creating the right emotional reaction, beginnings should perform two other functions:

1. They should give the reader such a background for the object of the letter and such an indication of its purpose as will make the rest of the material of the letter clear.
2. They should interest the reader in the message of the letter; or, in other words, a letter should begin at the reader's point of interest.

In performing the first function, giving the reader a background for understanding the message, beginnings have acquired bad habits. The necessity of referring a reader to a former letter of a specific date has caused the "We are in receipt of your letter of the 10th" to take the position of greatest emphasis in the letters, its beginning. The reader knows that his letter has been received as soon as he sees a letterhead from a firm to which he has written. Stereotyped beginnings show, moreover, that the dictator has not concentrated upon what he is saying. Certainly, he has not selected what he might say to gain a reader's interest.



It is possible with a little thought for the writer to create favorable attention, give the necessary data for a background, suggest what the letter is about, and at the same time engage the reader's interest. Many progressive firms furnish the detail necessary for looking up former correspondence by placing the phrase "Re—Your letter of August 14" two spaces above the body of the letter on a line with "Dear Sir."

The beginning sentences of a file of letters from the Upson Board Company illustrate types of good beginnings:

1. The sample and literature on Upson Board about which you asked in your letter of March 20 are going to you under another cover this afternoon.

This is aimed straight at the reader's interest.

2. Thank you heartily, Mr. Jones, for your splendid order . . . given our special representative, Mr. R. S. Smith, last week.

This creates the right emotional reaction on the part of the reader.

3. You will derive the greatest pleasure from Upsonizing your home.

This contains the main message of the letter.

The opening of any letter can, of course, be determined only by circumstances. In general, however, that which impresses the reader favorably is direct, illuminating, and considerate of the reader. An effective start is the strategic point in gaining the reader's interest.

**A Message of Importance to the Reader.**—An effective start must lead directly into a message of importance to the reader. The question at once arises, "What do people consider important?" Experience has taught us that they are moved by love, duty, pride, desire for gain, and fear. For example, "Pride sells fences" writes a manufacturer of

wire fences. If a product, idea, or service is to have importance, it must appeal to one of these basic motives. The writer's responsibility is to discover what use of the product may be a motive for its purchase and make its relation to the motive apparent. For this reason, we say one of the basic rules of salesmanship is to sell uses of products, not products.

A story about Samuel Johnson illustrates this principle of salesmanship. When helping at the sale of the brewery business of his friend Mr. Thrale, he did not say: "Here are vats and casks made of these materials and with such and such a capacity." Instead, he exclaimed: "We are not here to dispose of a parcel of vats and casks, but to dispose of the possibility of growing rich beyond the fondest dreams of avarice." He knew *gain* to be one of the most potent means of stimulating action. By the same token, the California Fruit Growers' Exchange does not sell a Sun-kist Extractor, oranges, and lemons to their distributors, but increased fresh fruit drink business.

**The Power of Suggestion.**—There is no salesmanship in playing up benefits which are fictitious; nor in presenting a real service in such a way that a customer is not conscious of the fact that he is receiving a service.

Comparison and analysis of the two following letters illustrate the difference in impression made by negative and by positive suggestions:

NEGATIVE:

Dear Sir:

We dislike doing so, but it is necessary for us to delay your order of May 12 until you write us again. You neglected to specify which shade of sweater you desire. We have three shades of blue: navy, midnight, and powder.

We are anxious to give you prompt service, but your order was not definite.

Please write us at once informing us which of the three shades you want so that we may make immediate shipment.

Yours truly,

POSITIVE:

Dear Sir:

Since we desire you to be entirely satisfied with the blue sweater you ordered on May 12, we write to ascertain your preference in shade.

The style you specify, you may obtain in navy, midnight, or powder,—all are in demand this spring.

As soon as your answer arrives, we shall mail the sweater by special delivery-parcel post.

Yours very truly,

The beginning of the first letter sounds a note of discontent by the words, "dislike" and "necessary"; that of the second, of harmony by, "We desire you to be entirely satisfied." The negative aspect is maintained throughout the first letter by "You neglected," "your order was not definite." The positive aspect is given the second letter by the statement of its motive: "Since we desire you to be entirely satisfied, etc."; and by the clauses: "We write to ascertain your preference in shade," "As soon as your answer arrives, we shall mail," etc. The letter features the customer's advantage in doing what is requested.

To give a letter a positive and optimistic tone we must present pleasing ideas and at the same time withhold all contrary and opposing suggestions. For illustration let us compare these sentences:

1. Money spent for Sunfast Shades is well spent as the life of these shades is much longer than that of other shades.

2. The extra money spent for Sunfast Shades is not wasted, as the life of these shades is not so short as that of other shades.

The first sentence is positive; it introduces no disagreeable suggestions. The second sentence has unpleasant suggestions because of the denial of certain things.

Endings of letters offer special opportunities for the employment of negative or positive suggestion.

Negative—We hope you will not be disappointed with the weather strips with which you have equipped your new building.

Positive—We are certain that you will be satisfied with the weather strips, etc.

Negative—Will you let us know what your objections are?

Positive—We believe this is the best solution.

**“You Attitude.”**—In the letter quoted on page 82, there is much of the writer’s point of view: “We dislike,” “We are anxious to give you prompt service,” “So that we may make immediate shipment.” In the letter quoted on page 83, there is much of the reader’s point of view: “You to be entirely satisfied,” “your preference,” and “You may obtain.”

The attitude of mind which causes a writer to stress the reader’s side of the case is called “You attitude.” It has come to mean in business letters, having the reader’s interest at heart and presenting a proposition in such a way that the reader will see and appreciate his side of it.

Unfortunately, too many correspondents think that the you attitude consists of sprinkling a page with *you’s*. One may use them, however, and still not write a letter with the reader’s interest at heart, or what is worse, write in such a way that he shows that he does not have his reader’s interests at heart.

There are many ways in which a writer may show his reader to which side of the case he is most attentive. The

way he begins a letter is one indication. It is evident that the correspondent was thinking primarily of his firm as he dictated the following letter in answer to a claim letter which said, "You have neither answered our letter nor refunded our money:

Gentlemen:

It is a strict rule of ours to answer all of our correspondence. As you did not hear from us, it is evident that either your letter or our reply was lost in the mail.

Our check is enclosed for \$8.25, the purchase price of the form that checked short.

Very truly yours,

If he had put himself in the place of his reader, he would have begun thus:

Gentlemen:

Our check is enclosed for \$8.25, the purchase price of the form that checked short.

As you did not hear from us, etc.

Yours very truly,

The following two sentences illustrate the effect of beginning a letter with *we* or *you*:

1. We were unable to clear up this matter without your assistance.
2. Your assistance enabled us . . .

We may show that we have the reader's interest at heart by talking to him about his enjoyment and his profit from possessing certain products, instead of about their materials, construction, and operation. We have the "you attitude" when in our adjustment letters we give only such ex-

planations of errors to our customers as are important to them; and when in collection letters, only such reasons for paying as affect their self-interests.

The "you attitude" prevents the habit of talking about "'steen story buildings," "firms the size of ours," "our unparalleled service"; of thinking that our firm is the only one in the country. A correspondent wants, of course, to induce his customers to think his firm the best one; and the way to make them think thus is to inform them how "our facilities," "our prices," and "our quality" can benefit them. It can be done by showing customers that their interests as buyers and his as sellers are coöperative. The "you attitude" is persuasion put into letters.

**Adaptation.**—Adaptation is adjustment to the reader. It affects display, language, ideas, substances, style, and tone. It depends upon completely visualizing the person addressed in the letter and writing in complete sympathy with him.

Adaptation may mean making a letter easy to read by displaying the message attractively upon the letter sheet, or by expressing it with simplicity. The following letter is adapted to the busy business man in readability, substance, language, and style.

*FILENE*—THE GREAT BOSTON MERCHANT SAYS:

Have the right goods—

At the right time—

In the right quantity—

And at the right price—

That's a Model Stock Plan.

*WE SAY*—

You can get the right goods—



In a very short time—

In any quantity—

And at Our New York Prices—

BY

'Phoning—

Wiring—

Writing—

Or visiting—

Our Branch at

315 West Blank Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Adaptation in language means using such words as the reader will readily understand. If business men would believe the psychologist's theory that the intelligence of seventy-five per cent of the people equals that of fourteen year old youths, they would cultivate the simplicity of Lincoln in their language. Correspondents have, however, a fondness for pretentious words: "A spark of electrical energy synchronizing with the flow of dynamic explosions." They have a fondness for technical language: "We can run this 10,000 volt line over to your pumping station and step it down 200 volts on the low tension side of your transformer, etc." Technical terms are appropriate when one technical man writes to another. They make writing concise. A business man may use business terms in talking to business men. But when either writes to uneducated housewives, to farmers, and to doctors, he must consider whether or not he will be understood. On the other hand, one professional man addressing another will create a bond of sympathy by employing in his writing terms peculiar to his profession. For this reason a printer might write an

effective letter to a printer, which, if read by a railroad man, would be ineffective. A bank clerk who did excellent work in selling office equipment to bankers failed when he attempted to sell western farm lands to farmers.

Adaptation may mean saying what is agreeable or making something agreeable by the way it is said. The following exchange of letters illustrates how one correspondent by his way of phrasing his message made a disappointing letter more acceptable to a disgruntled customer. The customer wrote:

Gentlemen:

Will you be kind enough to refer to my letter of June 2 in reference to the balance of goods that I ordered from you January 10 and which have not yet been shipped.

You have now had over six months to ship these goods; and as I paid my money for them when the order was sent, I think I am entitled to some attention in the matter.

The amount paid for the balance not received is \$25.57, and if you cannot send the goods, at least mail me a remittance for the money I paid you.

Yours truly,

A correspondent dictated the following letter:

Dear Madam:

We are very sorry that we are unable at this time to give the matter referred to in your letter the attention it deserves, as all of your previous correspondence with us has been lost. This is very unfortunate, but in handling the amount of correspondence which we do it is to be expected that a small amount of it is either lost or misfiled.

Please send us your invoice or a copy of your original order marking with an "X" the articles which were missing from your shipment. Upon receipt of this information we will give the matter immediate attention.

We are very sorry for the inconvenience and delay which have been caused.

Yours truly,

The correspondence counselor of the firm read this letter and substituted the following for it:

Dear Madam:

We appreciate very much your letter telling us of a shortage in your shipment, for we wish to give you prompt and satisfactory service. Unless we hear to the contrary, we assume that we have lived up to this standard. You will appreciate that it is humanly impossible to keep a letter now and then from being lost or misfiled.

Such evidently has been the fate of your letter; hence, in order to get the goods to you more quickly than we shall be able to if we hunt the original order, we wish you to send us your invoice marking with an "X" the missing articles.

If you have lost your invoice sent with the shipment, will you send us a complete copy of your order marking with an "X" the articles not received and return your cancelled check or money order receipt?

Yours truly,

The principle of adaptation accounts for the range in style in business communication from the most informal and conversational to the most dignified and conservative. For example, while the style of the following paragraph is adapted to interhouse correspondence, it might be too informal for letters to customers:

Suppose you do this: just leaf through your file of bulletins, look them over casually. Then turn this bulletin over and write me a few lines on the back and send it to me right away. Don't try to write a finished letter. Just unbend and let me have your thoughts off-hand. Speak your mind—harsh criticism or faint praise, just as you feel about it—and I won't feel peevish. I promise not to look for misspelled words or anything except your idea. But, believe me, I'll surely look for that and be glad to get it.<sup>1</sup>

Adaptation accounts for the fact that some letters written in poor English get better results than some written in good English. It accounts for inexpensive stationery sometimes bringing better returns than expensive stationery. Constant adaptation, however, to communities with low standards would prevent improvement in letters.

**Personalization.**—The personal salesman, with specific knowledge of a customer, takes into account specific differences and in his selling efforts considers personal factors. The sales letter writer needs to follow his example by personalizing his messages. A reader detects in Ready-to-Wear language, stock phrases, and trite diction not only indifference in the attitude of the writer but routine impersonal treatment, and is offended. On the other hand, fresh, natural, forceful language is pleasing. It is human nature to like individual and special attention. If a customer should write a brief request:

Gentlemen:

Please send us at once prices and full information on your Portable School. School has begun, and we have an overflow of 42 pupils.

Yours truly,

he will like the first of the following replies better than the second because the first letter makes references to the num-

<sup>1</sup> American Rolling Mill Co. *Letter Bulletin*.

ber of pupils and the speed with which he can be served, and the mention of such details makes him know that he is being treated as an individual rather than as one of a crowd.

1. Dear Sir:

You will find that the Model "A" Portable School described on page 100 of our catalogue will provide for your overflow of forty pupils. Moreover, the building is comfortable, economical, and can be shipped, erected, and ready for use within one week, etc.

Yours truly,

2. Dear Sir:

We are pleased to send you a complete catalogue of our Model A Schools which will help you to solve your housing problem, etc.

Yours truly,

Personalization as a means of salesmanship in letters is a special kind of adaptation. Where adaptation is broad in its scope, personalization is limited. Personalization does not consider one group of people as compared with other groups, but one person as compared with another. The personalized message is an attempt to make a letter suitable to a single person and a single group of circumstances. For example, the personal element was introduced into a sales letter to a farmer for an ice house by talking profits in butter and eggs; by suggesting how the ice house would affect a woman's disposition, and the happiness of his children, as well as that of himself. The personal element drives home the message to the person addressed. It makes him imagine himself in possession of the article desired: driving a car, operating an engine, or living in a new home. Personalization used skillfully takes a selling appeal out of the class of statements to which one merely agrees, and puts it in the class about which one feels. It makes a person *want* something.

The intimate and the personal touch distinguish letters: letters talk to a man at his desk in his office, or to a woman in her easy rocking chair at home. Advertisements address a crowd.

**Right Tone.**—Tone is an expression of attitude, and is caused by attitude. "He who speaks, speaks twice," wrote a critic of literature. "His words convey his thought, his tone conveys his mental attitude toward the person to whom he speaks. And certainly the attitude so far as belief goes is as important as the thought."

A college student reads the opening paragraph of a sales letter for clothes:

Dear Mr. ——— :

Fortunately there's a lighter side to life than the serious work which confronts you in your studies at the University. We know what you are up against—and that day by day the grind is getting worse and worse.

---

Cordially,

He feels that the writer intended to achieve a paternal tone.

A college professor reads the following opening paragraph:

Dear Mr. ——— :

The young man at the University, and often men in other walks of life, come to you for advice because you're an expert. They value your opinion. They have confidence in you. They know YOU KNOW.

---

Cordially yours,



He sees that the writer intended to create a deferential tone.

Upon assurance and high spirit does the success of many a letter depend. Genuine enthusiasm, moreover, has the power of creating favorable attitude. It carries a reader along and warms his feelings. It has the power of establishing a personal relationship between writer and reader. People will cooperate in almost any enterprise if only we assume that they will. If a writer, however, knows his cause is lost before he begins to write, he will reflect this feeling in his letter and weaken it thereby.

Of all the tones possible in letters, none are more to be desired than frankness, sincerity, and humility. The selling qualities of the first two are apparent. Sureness of facts, and authentic and complete information give a writer vigor of style. So much fun has been made, however, of "We beg to state," "May I say," etc., that a word needs to be said in reference to the tone of humility which they create and its pleasing quality to a reader. The phrases have been too much ridiculed to produce a favorable impression on the reader. To accomplish what these phrases once accomplished, a correspondent may use "It seems," "I conceive," and "I imagine." A conservative tone is given to the following letter by the phrases, "It would seem to us" and "It is quite possible that this publication would provide an advertising medium of considerable value to you."

Dear Mr. ——— :

We understand that your company produces tool steel, and we are wondering how extensive a market it is enjoying in the automotive industry. It would seem to us that as this industry is the largest metal working industry in the country, it would provide a market of considerable importance.

Under a separate cover, I am sending you copy of our book entitled: "The Automotive Industry and Automotive Industries," which describes not only the requirements of the industry for the more important

type of machinery, parts, equipment, and supplies, but also the circulation of the publication, **AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES**. It is quite possible that this publication would provide an advertising medium of considerable value to you; hence, if after going over the matter you feel that you would like to go into it further, and will drop us a line to that effect, we shall be very glad, indeed, to have one of our Chicago representatives drop in to see you the next time he is in Evanston. This naturally would not obligate you.

Yours sincerely,

Such statements make the tone of this letter contrast with those full of superlatives: "the best in the world," "the very best made," and "none better." One exaggeration, like one false statement, may undermine the reader's confidence in every other statement.

To create the right tone, correspondents sometimes deliberately understate a fact. "We have never had a complaint on our service," is not so readily believed as, "We have had few complaints." Exact statements and exact figures are preferable to round numbers. A person will accept the statement, "We have sold 1,230,496 cars," sooner than the statement, "We have sold over a million cars."

Upon such details depends the credibility of the letter, and for this reason, expert letter writers watch them. They create the tone of a letter which makes or spoils it.

**Quality of the Proof.**—A writer unknown to a reader cannot expect the reader to believe his mere say-so. Buyers are wary of buying sight-unseen. He has to convince his readers that certain material is all that he says it is; that it is adapted to their use, that it has given service in parallel instances; and that the product will answer their needs. To create confidence he depends upon tone, discussed above, and proof.

The ways of gaining belief need a comprehensive treatment and will be fully discussed in the chapter on Sales Presentation. At this time it is sufficient to call the corre

spondent's attention to the fact that a reader's belief in what is said depends upon tone and quality of proof and upon the kinds of proof.

Proof is of two kinds: direct and indirect. Direct proof may be official records of tests, or testimonials of satisfied users. Indirect proof is willingness to let the prospect take the product, test it himself, and determine whether it makes good in practice. Success of indirect proof depends upon proposing tests that impress the reader as convincing and giving accurate directions for conducting the tests.

**Service.** Any list of selling qualities essential to a business letter would be incomplete if the ideal of service were omitted. It is the reason any business exists, and its importance is evidenced by the number of firms having it as a motto. Correspondents have special opportunities to incorporate the ideals of service in letters answering inquiries, acknowledging orders, and adjusting complaints. The service element in letters is the result of expenditure of enough effort and time on the business at hand to close it satisfactorily to the customer. It is the result of realizing that every letter in some degree adds to or detracts from the reputation of a house. It emanates from the point of view that every letter from a customer is a sales-opportunity.

One firm believes so thoroughly in employing correspondents who look at every answer to a letter as an occasion to make a sale, that it tests applicants for correspondents' positions by asking them to write answers for such letters as the following and judges their merit by whether or not they see in the situation, seemingly barren of opportunity, a chance to make a sale, and whether they instill salesmanship into the answer.

Gentlemen:

Where is the catalogue for your car which you promised to send? Your salesman didn't call either. You need not bother now.

Yours very truly,

This firm considers the following answer satisfactory:

My dear Mr. Johnston:

A catalogue is being mailed to you today, and I telegraphed our salesman to see you immediately.

To be sure there could be no mistake, I took a catalogue to our Mailing Room and personally saw it started on its way to you.

Naturally, we are very sorry there should have been any delay, but you know, Mr. Johnston, how easy a letter may be lost or miscarried. We are sure this is what happened to the letter of instruction to our salesman, concerning your request for information. These fellows are working very aggressively on every name we give them, particularly right now, and if Mr. Stout of the Blank Motor Distributing Company had any idea you wanted to see him, he would have been right on the job.

The very fact that you inquire about the catalogue indicates that you have not yet purchased a motor car, and that is why I have wired Mr. Stout to call on you. If there is anything we can tell you supplementing this call—any information you feel you would like to have, please write us.

You will find that the Blank Car is one of the most economical cars on the market today; its smooth-running motor and easy riding will be a revelation to you; but the thing that will surprise you the most is the extremely low cost of operation and upkeep.

You will certainly be glad to have the facts that Mr. Stout will give you about the Blank Car, and a demonstration will prove to you what skilled engineering and expert designing can give you in motor car satisfaction and comfort.

Cordially yours,

The Blank Motor Co.

JOHN R. PASKEL.  
(Signed personally)

The service element in letters is a matter of complete and courteous attentiveness.

**Good Endings.**—Good endings have a vital part in putting selling qualities into letters. They are as important to the accomplishment of the purposes of letters as are effective beginnings because they are the climaxes and because they make impressions of a firm on the minds of customers until other letters or a personal representative blots them out.

Good endings perform three main functions:

1. To consummate the purpose of the letter.
2. To bring about this result at once.
3. To leave a good impression in the mind of the reader.

Knowing the functions to be performed by endings, the writer will find the key to his close in the nature of his message and in the plan of his letter.

One authority says, "In closing a letter 'Follow Through.' You have presented your thought in the letter—at the start and in the body. Now carry right into the closing with the same swing and with not a hitch to cause a break in the swing. Say what you want done in relation to what you have presented; but say it, not as you want, but because it will benefit the reader."

If no close suggests itself, just to close with the common courtesies observed in saying good-bye is preferable to making it apparent that one has nothing to say and saying it by means of such weak participial phrases as:

Hoping to hear from you soon . . .

Thanking you for past favors and anticipating the pleasure of serving you in the future . . .

Soliciting your future valued orders . . .

Assuring you of our best service . . .

Participial endings lack selling quality because they are hackneyed in phrasing and because a participle is a weak construction.

An equally bad close frequently found in adjustment letters is the psychologically weak close. It works against the accomplishment of the object of the letter. It leaves the reader uncertain or invites him to ask fuller concessions than he has asked: "Please write us at once if this is not satisfactory."

Closes are good in so far as they achieve the purpose of the letter. They are built in accordance with these principles:

| <i>Principle</i>                                                   | <i>Illustration</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Show the reader what to do and how to do it.                    | Just wrap a dollar bill in this letter at our risk and mail it at once to be sure it will reach us next Thursday. Don't bother writing a letter; you may be busy. The address will tell us that the remittance is from you.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2. Make it easier to go on than to go back.                        | I think that I can show that it is to your interest to use some of the advertising copy which I have written. If I can't, certainly, it won't be your fault. May I show you what I think is a more profitable way of advertising these goods? If when you see my copy you are not more than satisfied to pay my bill, there won't be any ill-feeling on my part. The decision will rest with you. |
| 3. Supply some little job that begins action in the desired train. | Send us a list of what you would like to turn into cash and let us submit suggestions—there will be no charge or obligation on your part. Write it on the back of this letter if you prefer, and put it in the enclosed return envelope. But let us hear from you.                                                                                                                                |



*Principle**Illustration*

- |                                                                                                                             |                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4. Consider some phase of the action as though he had already decided upon doing it — some thought of how or when or where. | <i>"Which paper, Sir?"</i> , instead of, <i>"Paper, Sir?"</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|

A summary of some of the concrete things to avoid as well as some to keep in mind in making every letter a sales letter will serve to clarify and to emphasize what has no sales value and what has sales value:

## Destructive to sales:

1. Suggesting the negative and unpleasant aspect of things.
2. Employing stereotyped phrases and diction, glittering generalities, and abstractions.
3. Permitting smartness, egotism, insincerity, and affectation.
4. Making extravagant statements.
5. Using unfamiliar illustrations, technical language, and high flown diction.
6. Being a "Handler of correspondence."
7. Reacting too humanly and naturally to the ignorance, lack of reason, dishonesty, and petty annoyances of customers.
8. Harping about service without giving it.
9. Ignoring a part of a customer's letter.

## Promoting sales:

1. Beginning with a positive and pleasant suggestion.
2. Showing the cheerful and optimistic side of the message.
3. Stressing the customer's side of a message.
4. Emphasizing through repetition and position what is desirable for the reader to think about.
5. Giving the customer high class, authentic, and complete information.
  - a. Allowing no break in thought.
  - b. Giving only true and believable statements.

6. Seizing every inquiry as an opportunity to serve a customer; and suggesting that yours is a good company with which to do business.
7. Presenting facts concerning a product vividly, and in terms of use, pleasure, and profit.
8. Closing with a clear statement in the last paragraph of just what you want a reader to do and how he may do it.

## CHAPTER VI

### LANGUAGE QUALITIES OF THE BUSINESS LETTER

- A. Readability of the Letter.
- B. Clearness.
- C. Conciseness.
- D. Completeness.
- E. Courtesy.
- F. Correctness.
- G. Character.
- H. Personality.
- I. Style.

A business house will insist, first of all, that its business letters sell goods or service; but a reputable concern will also insist on certain qualities of language. They are: readability, action, clearness, conciseness, completeness, courtesy, correctness, character, and personality. Business letters, moreover, have a distinct style of their own.

**Readability of the Letter.**—The details of Mechanical Make-up (Chapter IV) will create a pleasing or unpleasing first impression for the letter, and consequently determine whether or not it will be read. If paragraphs and sentences are short, typing clear, margins wide; if the physical make-up is planned to insure easy reading; if there are no breaks in continuity, no errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, no unusual words or unusual spelling incorporated, the letter probably will be read.

**Clearness.**—Spencer has told us that the first principle of writing is “to so present ideas that they may be apprehended with the least possible mental effort.” Observance of this

principle will insure clearness. It has first place among those qualities necessary to the success of business letters.

The importance of clearness in letters may be suggested by the dictum of one authority: "There are at least one million letters mailed every day in the United States, useless because they lack clearness. An obscure letter necessitates a letter of inquiry and its answer. There result three letters where one should have served the purpose."

The clearness of a letter is dependent upon many factors: thinking and planning, rhetorical structure, grammatical form, and language. Since each is explained in detail as the need for it becomes apparent in our progress in studying the business letter, it is not necessary here to do more than to outline each one.

Clearness, as the discussion of Planning and Constructing the Business Letter in Chapter VIII suggests, is largely a matter of prevision, which means that a writer before he begins to write must be in command of his subject, know definitely his purpose, and the message vital to its accomplishment. If he does not know before he starts to dictate whether he wants to say, "I am glad to grant you credit," or to say, "I grant you credit on certain conditions," he will not make upon his reader an impression, single and invariable.

The writer who knows what he wants to accomplish will be more likely to accomplish it if he will first write the substance of his letter in a series of three or four sentences, then develop each sentence into a paragraph, and afterwards write the transitions, the beginning, and the ending. Or he may write his ideas upon cards, spread them out upon a table, group them under inclusive headings, arrange the groups according to their value in carrying forward a main thought, or in developing a subordinate thought. Only by trial can the superiority of either method be found.

Prevision is concerned with: logical arrangement, clear transitions, and parallelism of structure of paragraphs and of sentences. The order to be adopted is fixed in general by

the selling function of the letter and in particular by the requirements of each type of letter as developed in response to special functions of collecting money, making claims, and adjusting differences. The rhetorical order and such schemes of arrangement as General to Particular, Result to Cause, etc., are developed in Chapter VIII.

Clearness depends partially upon the definiteness with which the units of the letter are connected. After the reader has discovered the purpose of the letter, probably in the very first sentence, he will need transitional sentences, phrases, or words, to guide him on his way, as the motorist needs sign posts. A writer must select conjunctions and connective phrases for their coördinating and subordinating functions as well as for their function of indicating the thought relations which sections of the letter bear to each other. For example, he must choose accurately from the coördinating conjunctions those that indicate (1) the same line of thought: *and*, *moreover*, and *likewise*; (2) contrast: *but*, *nevertheless*, and *while*; (3) consequence: *therefore*, *hence*, and *consequently*. He must discriminate definitely between subordinate conjunctions which indicate time: *when*, *then*, and *while*; place: *where*, *whence*, *whither*; and cause: *for*, *as*, and *since*.

Because a letter is a short form of writing, directive devices to help the reader to follow its thought are less needed in it than in long writings. Transition sentences, moreover, are less frequently used to aid its clearness than are conjunctions or parallelisms in construction.

Clearness in a letter is dependent upon the rhetorical structure not only of the composition as a whole; but also of the smaller units, paragraphs, and sentences. Matters of arrangement, transition, and similarity of molds, which affect the letter viewed as a whole, affect each of the smaller units. The control of the sentence has a special part in securing clearness, and the chief enemy to clearness in the sentence is ambiguity, caused by faulty reference, by misplaced modifiers, and by change in construction. An illus-

tration of ambiguity arising from each cause will serve as a warning to prevent errors of each type.

- |                                     |                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Faulty reference:                   | The teacher asked the student to get his book.                                                     |
| Revised:                            | The teacher said to his student, "Please get my book."                                             |
| Misplaced Modifier:                 | The window fell on her finger <i>which she was washing this morning</i> and smashed it.            |
| Revised:                            | The window which she was washing this morning fell on her finger and mashed it.                    |
| Change in grammatical construction: | Stenographers spend their mornings in taking dictation and in the afternoon they type their notes. |
| Revised:                            | Stenographers spend their mornings in taking dictation and their afternoons in transcribing notes. |

Undue length also prevents clearness in sentences; as,

Occasionally you receive a letter that is filled with long, involved sentences (like the one you are reading now) in which phrase is piled on phrase, and word on word, and idea on idea—often with only remote relationship between the ideas—until the meaning is almost entirely hidden; or if by some miracle that danger is averted, the seemingly endless task of reading wearies your mind and memory and tempts you to chuck the whole thing into the waste basket without spending further effort on it.<sup>1</sup>

If the sentence is not only long but also ungrammatical, clearness is impossible.

We are in receipt of your letter of November 20th, which explains very satisfactorily the shipment of steel that you made, and since you have shipped the 20 sheets of #22 gauge 32-1/4 x 88, you can cancel the second item on our

<sup>1</sup> American Rolling Mill Co. *Letter Bulletin*.



order #4508, which calls for 15 sheets of the 22 gauge 32-1/4 x 88, and also the 8 sheets of item #8 for 22 gauge 33 x 90 that we told you to substitute, for the 20 sheets you have already shipped will take care of us very nicely.<sup>1</sup>

Adaptation of language is necessary to clearness. Language, to reiterate, is an instrument of communication only in so far as it has the same meaning for the writer and the reader. The approbatory "Hear, Hear" used by the English people seemed to an American, unacquainted with its significance, an indication of disapproval.

The following paragraph, written in the language of people who buy stocks and bonds, is bewildering to one unacquainted with the technical terms:

*Sinking Fund:* The Collateral Trust Agreement provides for an annual sinking fund payment for the retirement of bonds, equal to one per cent of the maximum principal amount of the bonds outstanding at any time preceding such payment during the first five years, 1½% during the second five years, and 2% thereafter.

Adaptation of language is equally necessary when the gap between the reader and the writer is less wide. Terms such as invoice, bill, statement, current in mail-order houses, cause no end of confusion to the farmer's wife who finds it necessary to complain about the filling of her order for merchandise.

Short paragraphs, short sentences, simple words as well as simple constructions are the A B C's of clearness in business writing. The fact that business letters are comparatively brief and express simple facts makes a plain style appropriate to this form of composition. So usual are short paragraphs and short sentences in business letters that long ones are considered unbusinesslike.

**Conciseness.**—"The first aim of language is to communicate thoughts; the second to do so with dispatch." Hence the attention given to compression and condensation in busi-

<sup>1</sup> American Rolling Mill Co. *Letter Bulletin*.

ness letters. The value of conciseness in sales letters is generally appreciated. The success of the following letter is due to its important message and the concise way in which it is presented:

Dear Doctor:

Have you investigated the safe and sure coagulant-Fibrogen? Here is a product discovered by Dr. Mills of the University of Cincinnati Medical College, that for the first time in the history of medicine makes it a simple matter to stop bleeding.

When life hangs in the balance, when failure may mean disaster, Fibrogen eases the tense situation. Administered orally or subcutaneously, Fibrogen in a surprisingly short time stops almost every hemorrhage—except when the bleeding is from open arteries.

If you have not already done so, you can demonstrate the effect of Fibrogen in a few minutes. A dose of 3 cc, given in 6 to 8 ounces of ice water, 3 or 4 hours after eating, will reduce the clotting time of the blood from its normal of three minutes to that of one minute and a half, within 15 minutes or less.

We would be glad to supply demonstration package for trial. Use the convenient card.

Very truly yours,

A noticeable weakness of the personally dictated letter is its frequent lack of conciseness. For example, Letter I contains fifty-six words while Letter II contains thirty-five. The second letter does not, however, sacrifice clearness or courtesy.

### *Letter I*

Dear Mr. ——— :

I shall be in Chicago Wednesday and if this is not satisfactory to you, Thursday. I shall count on being there Wednesday, unless you wire me to the contrary.

We have just received yours stating that November 20th and 21st will be satisfactory for a meeting with all of our people, and will conform to that.

Yours truly,

### *Letter II*

Dear Mr. ——— :

If it is agreeable to you, I wish to see you in Chicago Wednesday; otherwise, Thursday.

In conformity with your letter, November 20 and 21, are satisfactory for a meeting with all of our people.

Yours truly,

Consideration of successful letters shows that a writer must harmonize conciseness with courtesy. If the object of a letter were merely to communicate a message, one might often express his thought in thirty words instead of fifty. However, it is doubtful if one can convey the desired feeling in thirty words. A cordial message is likely to be longer than a coldly formal one.

**Completeness.**—Certain details superfluous for one reader would be necessary for another. Completeness is concerned with how much material should be included; conciseness with how closely the thoughts may be packed. A general manager of a firm doing an eighty million dollar a year business told the author he considered no letter too long if every word was necessary, but that he found a one page letter too long if it said nothing of interest to him. Executives generally value their time as highly as their money or their energy. Always, they say, select only what is vital; reject the rest.

Economy of effort for the reader, however, and not for the writer is the final test of conciseness in a letter.

Since in the name of brevity, which too many business

men confuse with conciseness, the sins of the telegraphic style are committed, it seems important to list some of the things which conciseness *does not* mean:

1. Leaving out such necessary words as "we," "the," and "a."
2. Omitting greetings and salutations.
3. Disregarding the everyday politeness and courtesies of letters.
4. Referring to former letters for information which is necessary to the reader.
5. Curtness.
6. Taking it for granted that the reader can read between the lines.
7. Conveying the impression that the writer is in a hurry.

On the other hand, conciseness is attained by:

1. Having a definite object for a letter.
2. Planning how to reach the goal before beginning to dictate.
3. Getting rid of the idea that the letter must have an introduction.
4. Making a phrase do the work of a sentence, and a word do the work of a phrase.
5. Avoiding labored explanations which only the writer appreciates, digressions, and repetitions.
6. Avoiding mention of known facts, the obvious, or what can safely be left to the reader's imagination.
7. Avoiding stereotyped and trite diction.
8. Adapting the letter to the reader in thought, mood, and language.

**Courtesy.**—Courtesy in writing is simply consideration for the reader. Since a writer often sends his business letters uninvited to a reader, it is obvious that the obligation to minimize the reader's attention as well as to make his

reading pleasing rests with the writer. A writer has, moreover, a self-interest in making his letter pleasing. Its success depends largely upon its creating the right emotional reaction in a reader. In fact, creating the right impression is a part of its success. Lacking this, the letter fails, as does the following letter:

Dear Sir:

Nothing's the matter with us. Write your orders legibly and then they won't be misunderstood and wrongly filled. Anybody who writes "pears" to look liked "peaches" deserves to be put to a little inconvenience. Our wagon will call, not especially, but on its regular round. And losing you as a customer isn't going to put us out of business either—See?

Yours truly,

How little did its writer realize that the aim of business writing is to persuade, and that the idea of service should dominate every letter. Successful correspondents know, however, that expressing oneself is a very small part in business writing; very small and unimportant compared with impressing oneself in the right way, as does the following adjustment letter:

Dear Sir:

You are quite justified in being annoyed with our error in filling your order. We have no excuse to offer except that mistakes will happen in the best of regulated business institutions. But our wagon is coming around this minute with the 7 jars of the brand of peaches you ordered—one more for the sake of our good old trade relations.

Please let the driver have the half dozen jars of pears, and we promise not to let such a blunder occur again.

Yours very truly,

Courtesy in letters grows mainly out of the mental attitude of a correspondent: a feeling of fairness to a firm, to oneself, and to his customers; a desire to make a sincere effort for the best interest of all of these. Courtesy depends upon good health, sane living, the putting away of outside annoyances and worries before one begins to write. It is impossible for people chronically discontented, under constant tension, or disgruntled toward their employers, to be courteous.

Courtesy, moreover, grows out of knowledge and breadth of experience, and out of range of observation and understanding of the people addressed. Sympathy and imagination can do much to enable one to adapt what he says, his tone, and his diction to his readers; but they rest upon full knowledge of readers.

That an appreciation of courtesy in letters is beginning to be generally recognized is suggested by the instruction of Mr. Hays, while Postmaster General, to his staff: "Above all, I do not want the letters to be stereotyped." Stereotyped diction is discourteous because it takes out the personal note from letters and ignores the individuality of people.

Correspondents are likely to overlook the surest source of becoming acquainted with the authors of the letters which they are answering. Namely, the careful reading of these letters. The quality of paper, the letterhead, the choice of diction, the length of paragraphs, and the length of sentences all reveal the writer of a letter. For the best examples of courtesy in business writing, one may turn to the correspondence growing out of the more delicate relations in business: instructions to employees, letters making adjustments, letters concerning credit refusals, and letters collecting accounts.

Lincoln's letter to General McClellan may well serve as a model to business men trying to win assent to some proposition toward which a reader holds a distinctly different opinion:



My dear Sir:

You and I have distinct and different plans for the movement of the Army of the Potomac—yours to be down the Chesapeake, up the Rappahannock to Urbana and across land to the terminus of the railroad on York River; mine to move directly to a point on the railroad southwest of Manassas.

If you will give me satisfactory answers to the following questions, I shall gladly yield my plan to yours.

First. Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of time and money than mine?

Second. Wherein is a victory more certain by your plan than mine?

Third. Wherein is a victory more valuable by your plan than mine?

Fourth. In fact, would it not be less valuable in this, that it would break no great line of the enemy's communications, while mine would?

Fifth. In case of disaster, would not a retreat be more difficult by your plan than mine?

Sixth. Are you strong enough—are you strong enough even with my help—to set your foot upon the necks of Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keys, all at once? This is a practical and a very serious question for you.

**Correctness.**—Correctness in commercial letters means, on the one hand, punctilious accuracy in giving facts and information; and on the other hand, conformity to the best standards for business letters. The reason for accuracy as to facts is obvious, and was mentioned in Chapter III.

Correctness in the sense of conformity to usage is important because it arouses in the reader a feeling of approbation for the writer who gives him that to which he is accustomed. The writer thus shows himself acquainted with

the same world as the reader, and hence inspires confidence. Correctness in the sense of accuracy is as important as honesty; in the sense of conformity, as important as good manners.

Correctness is acquired by constant observation and practice. Much inaccuracy in information results from lack of concentration on what one is doing or from the worship of dispatch in business. The belief prevails among stenographers, transcribers, correspondents, and dictators that it is more to each person's self-interest for letters to be mailed on schedule than for the letters to give correct information or to be correct in expression. Correct letters are, nevertheless, the only business-building letters.

The following are examples of the kinds of error made through hurry rather than through ignorance; but the first mistake caused serious trouble, the second embarrassed a correspondence adviser, and the third chagrined a copy-writer:

1. "Note good for any amount," instead of "Not good for any amount."
2. "We always make good shoes defective in material and workmanship," instead of "We always make good, shoes defective in material and workmanship."
3. "Buy a coal that does not make lumps and clinkers like Makitan," instead of "Buy a coal like Makitan; it does not make lumps or clinkers."

**Character.**—The term character applied to a person generally means all that he is, all of his good qualities, and all of his bad qualities. It includes both his positive and his negative characteristics. However, when it is used in reference to business letters, it implies positive qualities that are assets in accomplishing the particular purpose of a letter: sincerity, enthusiasm, cordiality, and dignity. It excludes pose, exaggeration, and egotism. To give a letter character one should write into it not all of himself, but what there is in him that other people will appreciate and understand.

These following two beginning paragraphs show vivid contrast in the character of the two letters from which they are taken. The one is stereotyped, uninteresting; the other is vivid and interesting:

Gentlemen:

Replying to your postal of recent date, we are sending you under separate cover, a descriptive booklet of Blank Wall Covering, a folder relative to our Linings, and booklet, "Hints to Decorators," which we hope will interest you. Enclosed, herewith, is a letter relative to BLANK.

The Blank Company

Gentlemen:

Here's the little book for which you asked. It's a wonderful book in many ways, written with all the enthusiasm of men who have accomplished and are glad to tell their stories to others that they, too, may accomplish.

Yours sincerely,  
The Blank Sales Co.

But correspondents have no right to give to a letter a character misrepresenting their firm. A correspondent's responsibility is to recognize the sincerity, the squareness, and the friendliness that distinguish his firm and to embody these qualities in all of his letters. He will discover the qualities which the management of a firm desires for all of its letters by observing those embodied in its sales letters.

The following letter characterizes its firm as fair-minded and dignified:

Gentlemen:

While we realize that conditions in your plant are doubtless congested at this time, we feel that ample time was allowed within the limits of your promise for the manufacture and shipment of these doors.

Your promises become our promises when we tell our customers that they can expect their doors to be shipped on a specified date.

Therefore, while we understand conditions in your plant at the present time, we shall, in the future, rely on the fulfillments of your promises in making our own agreements with customers.

Yours very sincerely,

The value of character in letters results from the fact that business is largely a matter of good-will. If the products and the prices of competing firms are equal, there remains the difference in the responsibility of the two firms. A firm expresses its character partially through the actions revealed in its letters and a firm's letters will lack character if they do not carry the individuality of the firm.

**Personality.**—Personality means nothing more than character forcefully expressed. If personality is thought of as something distinct from character, character indicates all of a man's qualities; and personality, the courteous, enthusiastic, optimistic, and pleasing qualities which we feature in a letter. Personality implies the opposite of drabness; it suggests vitality, as in the expression, "His letters have personality." Personality, then, involves all the pleasing qualities of a letter, the tone of which constitutes its persuasiveness.

**Style.**—Style mentioned in reference to business letters suggests a variety of meanings. The most common of these is that style is *fine writing* or extraneous adornment and high flown diction. For purposes of illustration, two letters are quoted.

#### ILLUSTRATION OF FINE WRITING

Dear Sir:

You will be glad to learn of the publication of Lorna Frans' "Idylls of Summer," a dream reverie to the tune of the tinkling of windbells, color-stained with harmony.

There is a subtle, fugitive charm about the style of this book that is akin to the music of the windbell, that turns and spins its bits of colored glass on long threads.

The book is throughout sprinkled with delicate splashes of sunshine and harmony.

Yours very truly,

#### ILLUSTRATION OF HIGH FLOWN DICTION

Gentlemen:

On the 24th of May as well as on the 9th day of July, I wrote you in an effort to have you return me a balance due on my order of the tenth of May.

So far your silence has been both monotonous and abstruse.

Your reticence, in my humble opinion, regardless of the consequence of same, if continued, will brand you as a bunch of ignominious, fallacious, and surreptitious sharpers, with a deficiency of conscience corroborated by a serious lack of scrupulosity.

If this vitiated additament, of a diminutive nature, is essential for the well-being of some individual or thing, we are willing that it serve as alms, but we cannot imagine a commercial house of your apparent financial exuberance in such a precarious predicament, etc.

Yours very truly,

To conceive style as extraneous adornment is to separate it from the object it adorns and to make of it something apart from the thought with which it should be inseparably linked.

We give a more adequate conception of style as applied to business letters if we define it as a "form of words perfectly expressing a thought." This definition shows that

thought and words, matter and manner, are inseparably linked; it makes plain, too, that thinking is a process of choosing and arranging words. But it gives no other test of good style than the writer's satisfaction with the expression of his thought.

Business letters, however, demand both a reader and a writer, and their purpose is to impress the reader in such a way as to get desired results. Choosing and arranging words becomes, then, not a matter of expressing a thought alone but a matter of impressing the reader. Style in business letters is to be judged from the *reader's point of view*. Expression in business letters is *perfect* only when it secures the right results through creating the *desired impression*.

The writer who said, "Style is a method of activity perfectly suited to the results to be effected," gives us a satisfactory definition of style in its application to business letters.

An exposition of what constitutes perfection in operation is, moreover, an exposition of what uniformly obtains results and obtains them most efficiently. It may be given in a few fundamental principles.

The first principle of style is to consider the reader. Consider his ease of reading by paying attention to length, simplicity, and adaptation of words, sentences, and paragraphs. Consider his interest by selecting only those details which will affect his self-interest. Consider his delight by writing persuasively.

A second principle of style in business letters is to govern expression by matter. How vital the principle is, a quotation from Arnold Bennett will illustrate. "Well, of course it is. If it were otherwise, it would be ridiculous. A man who made love as though he were preaching a sermon, or a man who preached a sermon as though he were teaching school boys, or a man who described a death as though it were a practical joke, must necessarily be either an ass or a lunatic."<sup>1</sup> But this fact not all business letter writers

<sup>1</sup>"Literary Taste and How to Form It," Bennett, Arnold, p. 51.



know. They are constantly borrowing the graces of literature without thought as to their appropriateness to the subject matter.

The following letter seems ridiculous because the style does not seem suited to the subject matter, *union suits*:

Dear Sir:

Once again Father Time has forced us past another milestone in Life's Race, and we speed along with eye alert, mind active, and heart hopeful that we may keep up the pace until Victory is complete.

We are living fast; eventful days and weeks merge into momentous months with increasing rapidity. You and I are busy but cannot we take time to exchange a word of greeting and sympathy? May our friendship continue; may it become cemented even more firmly. This is our wish, and it shall be effected if it is within our efforts.

If also in a business way our company was helped to add to your material prosperity, we rejoice to inform you that never have we been in a better position to look after your interests. . . . As an illustration, we advise that we have secured a large quantity of Fleece Lined and Ribbed Union Suits on which we are offering special prices for delivery in January, February, and March.

We thank you for your past favors and hope you will again WAIT FOR THE BLANK COMPANY LINE, which we assure you will be up to its usual standard.

Sincerely,  
THE BLANK COMPANY

Style is governed by mood and appropriateness to the occasion. One thing that makes the foregoing letter ridiculous is that the writer was under the influence of strong emotion induced by the events of the Great War, rather than by the occasion to serve a customer's need for merchandise. There

are affairs of enough significance in business to admit of some grand manner, but the everyday transfer of merchandise is not the occasion.

The style of business letters is and should be governed by the writer's personality. For this reason, unless correspondents consciously adopt the stereotyped style characteristic of business letters, a practice not to be recommended, the style of business letters will be as varied as human nature is varied.

Buffon's often quoted "*le style c'est de l'homme meme*," stresses the personal in style. The personal in style is not, however, to be confused with personality obtruded. The following friendly reply to a request for a favor is personal in style, but certainly there is no parade of personality:

Dear Mr. Blank:

You have paid us such a gracious compliment that we want to reply as fully and satisfactorily as we can, but it is a little difficult to do so because we are not prepared in an organized way to reply to such a request as you have made, though we find it an interesting and sympathetic opportunity.

If you will allow us in the next few days to make a selection of letters from our files that have been used in correspondence, we shall be glad to send this collection for whatever use you can make of it.

We would like to have you understand when you receive the letters that they are spontaneous, original, individual replies, for all of our correspondence is conducted in this manner. We could not make a collection of so-called form letters.

Yours very truly,  
PROCTER & GAMBLE Co.

On the other hand, a writer who says, "The answer is in the negative" instead of "No," obtrudes personality. His

method of answering calls attention to his pompousness, a fact which is no part of the information desired.

Since style in business letters is governed by who writes, and to whom, in what mood, on what subject, and upon what occasion, it may be infinitely varied and yet good. One style or another depends for its justification upon its success, and the success largely depends upon its appropriateness to the occasion.

## CHAPTER VII

### ANALYZING FACTORS IN THE SELLING PROBLEM

- A. Determining the Specific Object.
- B. Studying the Prospect.
- C. Sources of Information About Prospects.
- D. Studying the Product.
- E. Central Selling Point.
- F. Value of Stressing Central Selling Point.

**Determining the Specific Object.**—Before a correspondent begins a letter, he must first clearly determine in his own mind just what he wants the recipient of his letter to do, after he reads it. Is he to feel in a certain way? Is he to think in a certain way? Is he to do some specific thing?

This decided, the next step is to decide by just what message and by just what tone he can create in his reader the impression which will lead to the response he desires. It is evident that the writer of the following letter did not realize the necessity of the second step.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your order of April 10, which we are pleased to enter for prompt shipment.

However, the receipt of this order leads us to believe that the conditions that retarded previous settlements have now so shaped themselves as to enable you to make satisfactory payments of your future obligations.

We, therefore, must remind you that in the past your payments were not so prompt as they should have been

in order to conform with the requirements of our time rule. In view of this fact, we are entering your order with the understanding that settlement of this account will be made promptly when your bill becomes due.

Our past correspondence must have led you to realize how essential in a business like ours is the policy of prompt payment. Fairness to the trade, as a whole, makes such a rule absolutely necessary. You profit from the rule just as much as we do and as do all others of the thousands of dealers who carry our goods. Since our goods are being sold on as small a margin of profit as possible, any broadening of our terms by a let-down of our rule would necessitate a corresponding rise in prices. To let such a condition be brought about by any laxity on our part in maintaining universally fair and business-like methods would be an injustice to the trade.

Yours very truly,

Its writer knew that he wanted the customer to pay his bills more promptly in the future than he had paid them in the past; but he did not know just what *message* and what tone would produce this action. Consequently, he first appeals to the customer's pride by telling him that he is glad to fill the order promptly because he feels sure that whatever retarded prompt payment in the past will not retard it in the future. Not satisfied with this method of inducing the response he desires, he takes a new tack and appeals to the customer's sense of fairness by showing him that he has been especially favored in being allowed credit on this particular occasion, when his past record for payments has been poor, and by showing him that any laxity in view of this fact would be unfair to the other customers. The result of this shifting point of view is a shifting, vague impression and failure to attain the desired end.

If a writer knows the purpose of his letter—whether it is to meet a want, impart a belief, arouse a feeling, or communicate a thought,—if he knows this both in terms of his message and in terms of the tone which will convey his emo-

tional attitude, he has determined the first step in solving his selling problem.

One authority calls the combined thought and feeling which constitute the object of the letter its load. He says, "Every letter has a certain 'load' to carry—whether it is a letter ordering goods, complying with a request, answering an inquiry, soliciting an order, asking payment of a bill, settling a complaint, following up a prospect, inspiring salesmen or dealers, trying merely to create good will, or any other kind of letter. Indeed, every advertisement has its 'load'."

The letter that carries its load successfully, carries an unmistakable tone and an unmistakable message. That is the reason why the following letter was effective:

Dear Sir:

Your friendly inquiry regarding our collections and deliveries is very much appreciated.

Our representative calls regularly in your locality every Tuesday morning around 10 o'clock. Would this time be convenient to you?

If so, just indicate on the card enclosed and return it to us or call Main 2476, and your wishes will be respected.

Your interest suggests that you might be willing to "try us out," and I can assure you every effort will be made to give you the benefits of the best service and attention possible.

May we commence next Tuesday?

Yours for dependable and careful laundries,

In order to decide the load of a letter, one must analyze the factors which constitute its selling problem: studying the prospect and studying the product, in relation to the object in view.



**Studying the Prospect.**—What was said in the abstract in Chapter III on the value of a correspondent's knowing human nature applies with a special force when one wishes to sell something to a prospect or a customer, be it an article, an idea, or a service. The correspondent makes a specific study of his prospect.

He will find that knowing prospects has wide connotation. From one point of view, it is comprehensive enough to include knowing markets, sources from which customers may procure merchandise, the conditions under which merchandise must be transported, financial conditions of the country, national and sectional traits. From another point of view, it distinguishes between an owner of a general store in a small town and a buyer for a large department store; between dealers and consumers or users; between women and men; farmers and city people; and between business men and professional men. And from still another point of view, it means knowing customers of the firm one represents well enough to be familiar with the conditions under which letters are likely to be read and the exact conditions under which a product will be used. In any case one does not know prospects or customers until he knows their relation to his firm, and their probable attitude toward his products. The young man who wrote the following letter which caused fifty per cent of the people to whom it was addressed to come to the store it represented and buy birthday presents, showed first-hand knowledge of feelings and experiences of fathers in rearing sons. It was this understanding which contributed most to the success of the letter.

Dear Sir:

Your son's birthday comes this week, and, if we know anything at all about daddies, that birthday means something to you.

Strange and wonderful are the memories that this event always brings back to the minds of fathers: the tender, anxious worries of the first two years—those months in

which the youngster first learned to prattle and coo, to crawl, then to walk and talk! We know, too, what memories the next few years brought—memories of missing teeth, black eyes, rough and tumble fights, torn clothes, and the very precious confessions of the youngster about the things he had done and hoped to do.

I know that, personally, the mere writing of this letter recalls many things about my own boy—things that most of us are just a little bit ashamed of confessing publicly; and I know that you, too, have given to that boy a place in your heart that nothing in life can fill.

May I have the pleasure of helping you to pick out a little remembrance for this day? You will find this store just crammed with all the things that all he-boys gloat over: foot balls and foot ball outfits, roller skates, air rifles, rubber balls of various kinds, baseball and indoor outfits, bicycles, and the hundred and one things in between for the vigorous, sturdy chap that loves the out-of-doors. For his quieter hours, we have just the type of books that he will love and cherish. For his creative moments, we have benches, sets of tools, and mechanical devices galore.

Drop in on your way home this evening, and let's go over some of these things. You will be amazed how quickly you will find exactly the birthday present that will mean most to him right now.<sup>1</sup>

Cordially yours,

(Personally signed)

**Sources of Information about Prospects.**—But how is the correspondent of a manufacturing company, a wholesale house, a retail firm, and a mail-order house, to have the personal knowledge which he requires for the success of certain letters? Obviously he cannot always draw upon his own experiences for knowledge of his customers as did the writer of the foregoing letter. Neither can he know personally all the people to whom he writes. If he always addresses his

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by the permission of *The Mailbag*.

mother or sister when writing to women, he may find that not all women are made after the same pattern. If he visualizes some lawyer-friend whom he knows, some doctor-friend among his acquaintances, whenever he wishes to write to lawyers or doctors, he may find himself shooting wide of the mark. Although these means may help, they do not give him all the knowledge about customers which he needs as a writer-salesman.

For knowledge of the prospect, his best source of information is selling experience for the firm he represents. It is hard to imagine a person writing a good sales letter for portable school houses, for example, who has never tried to sell a school house to a school board; a person answering inquiries in a wholesale firm who has never tried to sell merchandise, or even been in a store in a small town; a person making adjustments in a mail-order house who has little knowledge of farmers.

The following requirement for those preparing for advertising is given by a successful advertising man: "six months selling in a retail store or canvassing from house to house, a year selling for a wholesale firm as a means of learning first hand how hardware, groceries, and druggists' articles are sold." The same requirement holds for those who go into any phase of correspondence, whether it is credit, or collections, for it teaches a correspondent how credit or collection procedure affects sales.

With this general experience for a background, one may learn much about customers from studying their correspondence on file. If he reads this and has eyes to see, he begins to know them especially well by following their reactions through a sequence of events or transactions with which the letters deal. Some firms require at least two readings of every letter before it is answered because a second reading increases the acquaintance with its writer just as does a second meeting with a person.

A correspondent may gain from talks which salesmen give personally, in groups, or in conferences. These talks

can help him to visualize his readers, tell him what patrons ask about products, and acquaint him with some of the unusual services the products of his firm may perform for customers. The notebooks of salesmen in the field, containing observations on specific people, can be made valuable aids to the office correspondent in personalizing his messages.

If one is writing form letters to help a dealer sell a product, he will find talks with retailers undoubtedly the best source of learning their needs. Sometimes employees are sent out among customers to investigate their experiences with certain products. Procter & Gamble secured points about Crisco from note books of two young women whom they sent into six hundred kitchens where Crisco was used. A firm selling cement made a house to house investigation among farmers concerning the possible uses of cement, and prepared, as a result, six sales letters for the convenience of dealers which featured the uses of cement on farms:

1. To repair farm buildings
2. For barns and silos
3. For feeding floors
4. For chicken and hog houses
5. For dwellings
6. For garages.

For information in writing to members of one class, the correspondent needs to supplement his knowledge of individual prospects by a more general knowledge gained from trade papers. Advertising men read not only *Printers' Ink*, and the *Advertising Fortnightly*, but also *The American Grocer*, *Automobile Journal*, and *Electrical Dealer and Contractor*, according to the products for which they write advertising.

**Studying the Product.**—For a writer to present a product in the light of a prospect's desires and needs, he must know not only his prospects but also his product. "Selling goods is merely making another fellow think the way you

think about your own goods," says a star salesman; and what one thinks of his product is dependent pretty much upon what he knows about it. One has to know products in relation to their producers and distributors as well as to their users. One has to know them in relation to the history and policies of the firms which sell them, in relation to the talking points of the products with which they compete. An enthusiastic feeling toward ordinary articles of trade will be intensified if the correspondent has confidence in their component materials, pride in their construction, and appreciation of their usefulness.

The facts a correspondent should know about a product and the methods of acquiring information depend upon whether he is a correspondent in a factory, a jobbing, a wholesale house, or a mail-order house, and upon whether the correspondence of a firm is handled by each department or by a correspondence department. Sometimes he should be an authority in a limited field; sometimes he should know something about a great many things.

Facts are to be obtained from encyclopedias and scientific treatises in college and city libraries. Facts about raw materials are to be obtained from commercial geographies and from purchasing agents for factories. Factory methods and processes may be learned first hand by spending time on the floor of the factory and absorbing knowledge of and enthusiasm for the work of producing. Uses of products may be learned from owning the product one sells or from talking with people who are users of the product. The firm's method of distribution may be learned from sales managers and the information which they furnish to salesmen.

**Central Selling Point.**—A correspondent who has found the sources of facts and who knows that he wants all the facts, needs also to know what facts can be used to best advantage in his letter. Any fact is better than the exaggerations, the beautiful mirages which fill many letters. But there are some facts that are better finds than others since they make a product more interesting to a prospect. There



are some facts which have more possibilities of awakening imagination than others. There are some facts that convey the idea of personal benefit to people better than others. The fact that a firm was established in 1850, that the factories cover ten acres of ground, or that a firm has acquired a place of prominence, is of value only when proving a statement of interest to the prospect. The correspondent must be guided in choosing a fact to play up in the letter, by what will be of most interest to the recipient of the letter.

What there is about a specific product to interest a specific reader is known as the Central Selling Point. It is so called, because, though there may be many possible selling points in any given case, there is always one central point. It is discovered by analyzing the needs of the customer and the functions of the product which will make it have meaning to a prospect.

Buyers want things that make for health, comfort, safety, convenience, cleanliness, economy, beauty; they want things to eat and things to wear; labor-saving devices, pleasure-giving products, and means of transportation. They habitually classify whatever comes under these heads as necessary or desirable, and sellers know that to induce customers to so classify them is to take one step toward purchase. People who write advertising copy have learned the value of a terse headline that matches one specific merit of a product against one sufficient reason for a person's buying it. Each of the following slogans is built around one central selling point:

|                                   |             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| A SKIN YOU LOVE TO TOUCH.....     | Beauty      |
| A MILLION MILES FROM DULL CARE... | Relaxation  |
| SPOTLESS TOWN.....                | Cleanliness |
| BUILT LIKE A SKYSCRAPER.....      | Strength    |
| 99.44% PURE.....                  | Purity      |
| CHESTERFIELDS—THEY SATISFY.....   | Pleasure    |
| THE STRENGTH OF GIBRALTAR.....    | Safety      |
| HAVE YOU HAD YOUR IRON TODAY?...  | Health      |



They have learned the value of playing up any feature about a product that has news value.

The following letter to dealers about a commonplace enough product was made interesting by making a feature of "*February the Salesman for Rubbers.*"

FEBRUARY—One of your best salesmen for Rubbers, Overshoes, and Boots if you'll just give him a little help.

Finish strong on your Winter selling season of rubber footwear. "Push" your goods a little, and you'll sell as much this month as you did during the last thirty days or during December.

The spirit that rings the cash register is—"Get the profits while you can." Any time from November to April is "open season" on rubber footwear; so display your rubbers—talk rubbers—SELL rubbers.

With Goodrich "HI-PRESS" and "STRAIGHT-LINE" you have goods that you *know* will satisfy your customers, save them money and net you a substantial PROFIT.

To do this you must have just what your customer wants, *when he wants it*. How is your stock? Size it up *today* and fill-in so that you won't have to disappoint your trade or lose any sales. Here is an order blank for your "hurry-up" order.

We're ready to give it SAME DAY SERVICE.

Yours very truly,  
THE B. F. GOODRICH RUBBER COMPANY

Boot & Shoe Sales Department.

Facts about a product that have advertising *value*, *facts* that appeal to the imagination, charm people. The *unusual* is what gives the following account news value, and draws the reader's attention to the product:

In all the United States there could scarcely be found two towns more different than Albuquerque, New Mexico, with its Spanish mission and Pueblo architecture, and Bangor, Maine, with its spreading elms and white Colonial homes.

Yet in both these towns P and G The *White Naphtha Soap* is the largest selling laundry soap.

This is indicative of the condition of the whole country over—P and G is the largest selling soap in America.<sup>1</sup>

It is plain that products must be seen by the correspondent's mind as well as by his eye if he would suggest the story of human enterprise to obtain them, of human ingenuity to manufacture them, of human courage and intelligence to distribute them. One writer has looked at *Maxwell Coffee*, through the mind's eye and has put his vision into this copy:

### *GOOD TO THE LAST DROP!*

Romance lies within the circle of your cup of Maxwell House. That fragrant aroma breathes of distant sun-wrapped highlands where the finest coffee is grown.

There are visions of great ships beating foamy miles to bring the treasure home.

There's the long, long quest for the exact blending of these fine coffees to create the flavor that is 'Good to the Last Drop.'

Then the ceaseless vigilant guard set over that priceless accomplishment to see that it reaches you with all its flavor and its goodness unimpaired—the sealed tin which brings Maxwell House Coffee to you, crisp and fresh from the roasting cylinders—untouched by hand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Procter & Gamble Company.

<sup>2</sup>Cheek-Neal Coffee Co.

The writer quoted above explains how he describes products to make them appeal to the imagination: "I don't waste my time getting a preponderous mass of reasons, making lucid arguments flawless. Not if I am wise. There may be a hundred reasons, but a beautiful syllogism never pushes your hands into your pockets. I've got to break down that wall of inertia which surrounds us all, as I grasp a far more potent weapon than pen logic. When I write my song, I strive to use a power that has moved the world since its beginning—the language of poets." Incidentally, he suggests that imagination must be employed in finding material for copy.

A copy-writer for a Jordan car has employed imagination in finding new functions for a car which makes it appeal especially to the young folks of the land.

### I THINK SHE CAME FROM A LAND OF FIRE

On a summer day undreamed of beside the fabled sea—a wonderful girl and a wonderful boy and a Playboy making three, but not a crowd.

There is an admirable group of people in this country who have learned one simple thing——

It isn't where you are that counts so much—it's whom you're with.

A car of personality and charm is something vastly more than a product of steel and aluminum with a spark of electrical energy, synchronizing with the flow of dynamic explosions.

It's a companion for your gayer hours—like a good friend, it's a joy in your freer moments—and a practical aid in your busy life.<sup>1</sup>

It isn't a motor—just a transmission—just an axle.

It's a Jordan, and that's saying a whole lot.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by the permission of The Jordan Motor Car Co.

The writer of Phoenix Hosiery copy has endowed Phoenix hosiery with some of the qualities of human nature, 'companionableness,' 'friendly elegance':

You may walk one hundred thousand miles or more during your lifetime—in stockings. How to achieve that magnificent journey with comfort, elegance, and economy is truly an important matter. And the total hosiery-cost is great. Phoenix has become the *companionable* hosiery of the world for the very good reason that it furnishes to men, women, and children everywhere, record-long miles of *friendly elegance* and comfort at small cost.

It is profitable for the student of letters to note and evaluate examples of this kind of copy in the advertisements which fall under his eye if he wishes to employ the forces of his imagination in the composition of letters of all kinds. Used with good judgment, such embellishments often enhance the appeal of the product and supplement the effect of common-sense argument.

**Value of Stressing Central Selling Point.**—*The Good-year Tire and Rubber Company Manual* stresses the value of concentration on one central selling point, not on the grounds of rhetorical unity, but because it makes letters easy to read, to understand, and to remember. As an illustration of the disastrous effect of presenting multiple selling points, a letter is given which was written by a dealer who took pride in the number of services his station could offer his patrons. Not wishing to leave out anything good, he has crowded too much into one letter, with this result:

Dear Sir:

If you have a tire give out anywhere within five miles of Tiretown, call Main 1840.

We have for your convenience a complete stock of tires, tubes, and accessories.

We have established as a service station for Blank Tires. We chose Blank's after several years' experience because they proved to be tires that stand up best on our customers' cars.

Our garage is the cleanest and most inviting place to leave your car you'll find in the country. It is fire-proof, and roomy enough to turn in without danger of bumping.

When your tires need air, just drive up in front and blow your horn. Our men are always at your service.

We maintain a service station for Willard Batteries, and are equipped to do all kinds of battery overhauling.

Our repair men are expert in all kinds of automobile repairs. You'll find they are just as familiar with your car as a doctor is with the ailments of your family.

Take advantage of our service. It will mean a saving to you.

Yours very truly,

When the reader has finished reading the above letter, his interest has not been particularly aroused in any of the many services offered. At best, one point after another has engaged his attention. No one point has been presented in a way to move him to action. As a contrast, the following letter, which raises the reader's interest to the buying point, concentrates upon one thing.

Dear Sir:

So often you hear the word "Service" advertised, preached, and sung into the public ear by various merchants.

"Buy from us and get our service," is their slogan.

Now, that doctrine is fine—absolutely all right—but the "Service" idea is so often abused that we want to tell you exactly what the Blank Supply Company means by its service to you on the tire question.

We don't have any fandangle, insane service that must be paid for and paid for generously by the unsuspecting 'victims' who use it.

But here's a secret.

Our customers are getting longer tire mileage because:

We sell them better tires:

We take care of the tires after they're sold;

We advise proper size, air pressure, etc.;

We know our customers as we know our Bible.

And because our business is our life, our joy, and our ambition, we are making friends.

Don't gamble on tires. It's cheaper to get on our roll-call.

Very truly yours,

The same principles of concentration on one point at a time holds true for each letter of a series in a sales campaign. One impression at a time, each planned to build upon the interest of the other, has been found to derive the best results. The only letter to which this rule need not be rigidly applied is the one which is written to summarize the others and to bring the series to a climax; even here the result will be better if all that has been said in the series is fused into one final thought.

Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon concentration on the Central Selling Point.

People, for the sake of courtesy, often tolerate salesmen who bore them; letters, never. If a letter is read, it is because it is interesting. People do not read the letter to find out if the product interests them; they read about the product *if* the letter interests them. Mr. C. C. Hopkins, President of Lord & Thomas, says, "Analyze those letters. The ones you act on, or the ones you keep have headlines which attracted your attention. At a glance they offer something you want, something you wish to know." There is the key to the successful letter: *Telling the reader what*



*he wants to know and telling it to him so that he can see it at a glance.*

The correspondent may write an effective letter, especially if it is a short letter, and accomplish his task so easily and quickly as not to be conscious of having taken distinct steps. But the most effective writers succeed only by proceeding through distinct stages and making certain decisions necessary at each stage.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTING THE BUSINESS LETTER

- A. Plan in Relation to Nature of Business Letters.
- B. Plan in Relation to Purpose of Business Letters.
- C. Importance of Plan.
- D. Planning a Letter in Accordance with the Principles of Focus and Movement.
- E. Arrangement.
- F. Movement or Progress.
- G. Planning the Business Letter in Reference to the Mental Journey of One Who Is Influenced in Thought, Feeling and Action.
- H. Planning the letter in Reference to Effecting Selling Steps by Argument or by Suggestion.
- I. Types of Arrangement.
  - 1. *From General to Particular or Particular to General.*
  - 2. *From Result to Cause or from Cause to Result.*
  - 3. *Predicament to Remedy.*
  - 4. *Parallel Development by Comparison.*
  - 5. *Narrative Plan.*
- J. Changes in Construction.
- K. Determining the Beginning.
- L. Determining the Ending.

Having decided upon the material of the letter, the correspondent faces the problem of putting it together to accomplish a desired purpose, of constructing it. He does not, however, begin at once the process of construction. He draws up a plan or scheme for the arrangement of his material, just as does a man about to build a house or a bridge.

Moreover, in making his plan, he has to take so many factors into consideration that his problem of arrangement is complex, even though the plan may ultimately be nothing more than a number of sentences carrying forward the thought. His management of material must provide not only for the selling and the language qualities discussed in Chapters V and VI, but also for the nature of composition; the purpose of composition; the principles of construction such as focus and movement; the steps in the mental journey of a buyer; attention, interest, conviction, and action; and the method, argument or suggestion, chosen to influence action.

The various impressions which the correspondent must secure and the principles responsible for these impressions, in accordance with which he will have to arrange material to gain the effects he desires, are the substance of this chapter. The nature of composition is the first thing that makes a plan necessary and that the writer must take into consideration in making a plan.

**Plan in Relation to Nature of Business Letters.**—Weavers of tapestries and rugs sitting at their looms and copying patterns reflected in mirrors are following a procedure somewhat analogous to that followed by all writers as they take thoughts and try to spread them out on paper for other people to see and to comprehend. The weaver cannot spontaneously reproduce on his loom the pattern he sees in his mirror. He must first survey its general form and outline, its various parts, and their colorings; and then by weaving in certain amounts of one color after another, in certain spots, gradually produce the pattern.

The writer has a mental picture of what he wants to accomplish, of its general form and outline, and, more or less vaguely, of its parts. But he cannot flash the picture in his mind's eye upon the page which he is writing or upon the reader's mind as he would flash a scene from a moving picture upon a screen. He has to create one part of his composition at a time, always keeping in mind its relation

to the whole. The reader element, moreover, presents a difficulty for the writer which the weaver does not experience. The weaver need not consider, in selecting which part of the pattern to weave first, anything except the physical facts necessary in constructing physical things, and his own liking in the matter. The tapestry will present its message in finished form. The eye will see the pattern and the mind comprehend its meaning in a moment of time. The writer, on the other hand, must present his thoughts piecemeal, a word, a phrase, or a sentence at a time. He must take care to suggest the general form by significant opening sentences and then present succeeding ones in such sequence as will cause them to fit easily into the pattern of thought which he is constructing.

The difference in the method by which impressions are received and comprehended constitutes one of the essential differences between the pictorial arts and literature. Pictorial art creates for the beholder one fixed impression; literature induces a series of mobile impressions developing with each addition of material and exacting constant effort on the part of the reader.

The difference holds, moreover, a great significance for the writer; he must know what impressions to create and in what order he must present them to the reader to make them produce the one final impression which he desires his composition to convey. This moving, changing nature of the impressions created by composition constitutes the chief difficulty in planning.

#### **Plan in Relation to Purpose of Business Letters.**

—The purpose of a particular business letter and the relation of construction to accomplishment of purpose is the author's second consideration in making his plan. Letters have a definite impression to create and a definite response to secure, and material and presentation are the elements which effect the desired result. The writer's disposition of them determines the impression he makes. A brief analysis of the following two letters, employing practically the same

material, will show the relation of construction to accomplishment of purpose:

*Letter I*

Dear Sir:

I sold your shipment of Orris today at \$8.00 per pound, and enclose herewith \$98.00.

Eight dollars was the highest offer I received, and they were not anxious to take it at that price. Chinese exporters will not handle the cultivated root at all. They say it will be lower a month from now than it is at present. The Chinese claim that the cultivated root is not so good as the wild root, and refuse to take it at any price.

The whole shipment weighed twenty-four and seven-tenths pounds, amounting to \$197.60.

I am sending you your note, given January 22, 1922, which amounts with interest to \$86.60; a receipt for \$13.00; and my certified check for \$98.00.

The weight you give is a little larger than that which they give, but I think their weight is correct.

Please acknowledge receipt and oblige.

Yours truly,

*Letter II*

Dear Sir:

At last I have succeeded in selling your shipment of Orris. You will, I believe, be pleased with the price after I have explained that it was the highest offer I received, and that there is a likelihood of prices falling within a month on account of the Chinese exporters refusing to buy the cultivated root at any price. They claim the wild root is much superior.

There is a discrepancy, moreover, between your estimate of the weight and the purchasers' figures of the

gross weight due to shrinkage. Because of this shrinkage the latter is, I believe, correct.

The following explanation will make clear the details of the sale:

Amount from sale, 49  $2\frac{2}{5}$  lbs. @ \$4, \$197.60

Details of remittance:

|                                             |          |          |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Your note, Jan. 22,<br>1922, with interest, |          |          |
| total                                       | \$86.60  |          |
| Commission                                  | 13.00    |          |
| Certified check                             | 98.00    |          |
|                                             | <hr/>    | <hr/>    |
|                                             | \$197.60 | \$197.60 |

I shall be glad to hear that you have received this settlement and that it is satisfactory.

Yours very truly,

Dissatisfaction results from the first letter because:

1. The disappointing news is placed before the explanation accounting for it.
2. The lack of logic in the arrangement of material makes it difficult to follow the details of the transaction.

Satisfaction is created by the second because:

1. The most favorable aspect of the unpleasant news is presented.
2. The details of the transaction are clearly set forth. Details are given together and are presented in good physical form.
3. The explanation is placed before the information. The writer thus makes bad news good news.

**Importance of Plan.**—The failure of the first letter either to convey the message clearly or to create the desired response affords us a very practical reason for carefully planning a letter. It shows us that a writer who sets down any idea that may occur to him and in any order whatsoever, does not accomplish the intended purpose of the letter.



**Planning a Letter in Accordance with the Principles of Unity and Coherence.**—The same principles of construction are observed in the writing of effective business letters as in the writing of other types of composition. We have known them in elementary courses of composition as unity, coherence, and emphasis.

**Unity.**—Unity is concerned with the selection of material and its efficient arrangement to accomplish the desired end. Selection involves collecting the facts and ideas which seem valuable in accomplishing a purpose, determining their meaning, and deciding their value in accomplishing a given purpose, choosing what has most value in accomplishing the purpose, and rejecting the others.

Unity of material may be especially well observed in sales letters since as a class they stress one central selling appeal. For example, the following letter concentrates upon the message: "Our January Clearance Sales can save you money."

Dear Mrs. Williamson:

If you are looking for a chance to save much on wearing apparel, or house furnishings, and on home things (and what woman isn't?) our January Clearance Sales are for YOU! There are reductions in all departments.

This is the month when buyers find certain things have been selling so briskly that only a small quantity remains. Rather than carry them over to another season, Mrs. Williamson, they place on them a low Clearance Price to close them out.

In addition to this, certain well-known manufacturers are also "cleaning house," and offer us goods at prices so low we take advantage of them at once, and rush in merchandise to become a part of our Clearance Sales.

This makes January, the month when many folk are planning their household and clothes "budgets," a won-

derful month to start buying wisely and well—to stretch those budgets surprisingly far!

Very truly yours,  
BLANK AND COMPANY

Lack of unity is common in letters of people ignorant of the departmental organization of business houses. Anyone who is acquainted with the work of the correspondence department of a mail-order house knows that a large number of correspondents are employed to separate what is called Mixed Correspondence. A single letter sometimes includes an order, an inquiry, and a complaint. Less difficulty would arise if a separate letter were devoted to each even though all the letters were enclosed in the same envelope. Even better results would be obtained if each letter were sent to the particular department, division, or subsidiary which dealt with its particular subject matter. A business letter should deal with nothing less and nothing more than the subject.

A common lack of unity in letters springs from lack of agreement between the message and tone, or from a change of tone within the letter. That collection correspondents are frequent offenders in this regard is shown by the following letter:

Dear Sir:

You have failed to settle your account, although you have promised—given your word—that the account would be paid without further delay. It is apparent that you are a very careless, inefficient person, and that your promise to pay is an empty one.

.....

This letter is written in the friendliest spirit, but we are obliged to judge a man by his record and then act accordingly.

.....

If you don't pay your bill at once, your name will be entered on the list of indiscriminate persons whose promises are mere "scraps of paper."

Yours truly,

**Coherence.**—Appropriate arrangement of thoughts is the source of coherence. It involves taking the ideas that have survived the process of selection and putting them down on paper, not necessarily in the order in which they have come to mind, but rather in the order in which they can be most easily put together to convey the desired message or make the desired impression on the other person's mind. The effect of an entire letter may depend upon what is in the opening sentence. A letter beginning: "To help you get satisfaction from our tires in the future, we are going to tell you what caused your trouble this time," conveys an entirely different message in answer to a complaint upon service of tires from one that begins: "Your tire trouble was due to under-inflation." If the letter begins with an explanation of the tire trouble, the customer gets the message: "I am not going to be given a new tire." If the letter begins by assuring the customer that he will be given satisfaction, he reads it in a better spirit.

**Movement or Progress.**—Since the nature of composition requires that the final impression be reached by a series of impressions, the plan must provide for movement. In gauging movement, the writer must consider not only the number of ideas necessary to make a message clear to a reader but also the number compatible with his patience and good-will. Subject matter, simple or complicated, can be presented to the reader only by one impression at a time and a few words at a time. A reader is irritated by having thoughts progress more rapidly than he can comprehend; he is wearied by attempting to understand more quickly than his native ability provides for; and, on the other hand, he is bored when the movement is blocked by illustrations,

explanations, reasons, after he has understood and accepted the central thought. Two illustrations will make clear this idea. The movement of the first letter is so rapid that it gives the reader the feeling of being dragged along by the hair of the head:

Dear Sir:

You want your letters to GRIP the reader right at the start, not eventually.

You want them  
 —to GET YOUR STORY ACROSS clearly and quickly,—with a “punch”  
 —to make up his mind  
 —to warm his interest  
 —to 'wake into life the magic thought

“I'll Buy!”

*The Blank Letter Writer* is the book you need to make your letters win. This is a day of swift successes and quick money-making. The Plodder is a dying race. A new type of man has arrived—he's

“The Go-Getter!”

He grabs all the good ideas he can  
 He puts life and lure into his letters  
 He makes them GO AND GET THINGS

So can *you*. It's no dream.  
 The book enclosed tells how.

Yours truly,

The second letter lags “as the tortoise goes, heavy and slow.” Moreover, since its writer is not a friend of the person addressed, its tone is in poor taste:

My dear Friend.

I'm stumped. As one professional man to another, I'm coming to you for help.

My profession is scientific and business writing. I was getting my preparation over on the other side of the campus in the 'cave of the winds,' the literary department, when you were struggling with S. and R. spherical pendentives.

You were a good fellow, but since then, if what I've heard about you is true, I'm supposed to be afraid of you.

Nevertheless, I'm stumped, and I'm going to tell you my trouble—and as I write, I'm going to think of you as I used to see you then, with a drawing board under your arm and a Junior toque on your head. So here goes.

I was employed January 1st of this year to do some special writing for a manufacturer of heating systems in this city. After I'd been here about a week, my employer said, "Smith, I want you to spend the next three weeks making a study of one of the types of heating systems that we manufacture. I want you to loaf around the factory until you understand every process in its manufacture. Then I want you to go into a number of homes where it is installed and study its performance. Come back when you're through and give me your opinion of it."

I did as he instructed. I studied this system from every angle. I studied it impartially. And regardless of any commercial motive what-so-ever, I'm frank to say to you as I said to him, that it's the greatest heating system I've ever seen.

"You believe that absolutely?" he said.

"Yes, sir!" I assured him.

"Your job now is to convey that truth as you see it to every architect in the country," he replied.

"Easy," said I.

But as I was a writer, I decided to study my audience rather carefully before I wrote a word. So I began to ask people what kind of a man the architect was.

Said one, "Well, the architect is different; he is a professional man—doesn't talk commercial language. He hates anything commercial."

Said another, "Hardest man in the world to sell—too busy to listen to you—all business. Why, I can't even get acquainted with one."

And another, "He's a high-brow. An artist—he's interested in Beauty with a capital "B." Wants good material but isn't interested in anything but the æsthetic."

I went the rounds, and I'm reporting EXACTLY what I heard. Finally, I visualized my audience as best I could and started in to "educate" you as per instructions. Do you know what this composite picture of you looked like—as I wrote? Well, you had a professional looking beard; hair a little thin; keen, piercing eyes; a manner so refined that it kept me uncomfortable every minute for fear you'd start talking about eggs and darts, and Gothic buttresses while I was expounding on Old King Coal.

I wrote about a paragraph and gave it up—and went over and called on Brown, an architect. I wanted a little closer picture. I got it. I see Brown now as I write—but I don't see any "composite architect"—I see my old friend of the campus, just a little older, and still a "damned good fellow."

I've worried about you, Mr. Architect, for four months. It's May 29, and I haven't "educated" you a bit. What am I going to do?

On the square, I've got a cracking good story already written up and ready to send on this heating system, written in plain language—but they tell me to write it so an ARCHITECT would read it. For the love of Mike, will you tell me just how you differ from other men so that I can put it "in your language"?

Or, if I'll promise to be fair and not try to sell you anything, can I send you what I've learned about this heating system, dressed in just plain Yankee?



Anyhow, write me a little personal letter—to my home address given above—and tell me I'm right—that you're the same fellow I knew on the campus—that you like a good story, plainly told—particularly if it's an honest presentation of a new angle on home heating.

I'd like to take your reply to the boss!

Thank you—

Contrast the movement of the following letter. It seems neither too fast nor too slow:

Gentlemen:

Why don't you send your customers a cordial Holiday letter thanking them for the business they have given you?

A letter is warmer and more pleasing than a formal, printed, or engraved card.

The good-will of your customers is one of your biggest assets. Use letters to hold and increase this valuable asset.

Let us multigraph and mail a good-will letter for you, filling in the name to match (like this letter). It costs less than engraved cards and is more effective.

You will find it an excellent investment.

Yours very truly,

The writer of the letter concerning heating systems certainly gives no evidence of having known before he began to write his letter what his objective was, what he was driving at, or where he was coming out. We get hints that he wishes to tell architects the good points about a heating system. He is trying to find out if they are good fellows and want to hear more about heating systems. He goes around the proverbial Robin Hood's barn to put in details

which do not work toward the accomplishment of the real purpose of the letter. The writer of the holiday-greeting letter, on the other hand, focuses his energy upon one objective which he has defined clearly: Send letters to your customers because they cost less and are more effective. He has no doubt worked from a plan to accomplish his object. A plan guides a writer's selection of material at every step; it enables him to measure his progress toward his goal, to determine how rapid his progress is, and to tell when he has arrived.

**Planning the Business Letter in Reference to the Mental Journey of One Who is Influenced in Thought, Feeling, and Action.**—While the well known principles of construction, focus and movement, govern the building of effective business letters, yet the function of a particular letter is also a significant factor, shaping its form and classifying it as to type.

Every letter, as has already been pointed out, no matter what its type, has certain steps of the selling appeal to achieve: attention, interest, conviction, and action. They may well be called psychological steps since they mark the mental stages of a person being influenced to some action.

In planning to attract the attention of the reader, the writer has to take into account the time, the place, and the circumstances under which the letter will be opened. He will consider what is likely to be in the reader's subconscious mind. He will select his opening to meet existing conditions and to produce a favorable response. The following letter catches the favorable attention of a general manager by mentioning to him in the opening paragraph the products manufactured by his firm, and thereby delicately implying an interest in his welfare.

Dear Sir:

If I were in the market for Circle A Portable Buildings, and I found that engineers for General Electric and Westinghouse Electric had selected your buildings;

Or that Ford Motor Company had bought your buildings forty-six times in succession;

Or that such people as the manufacturers of the Steinway, and the Mason and Hamlin pianos, Edison, and Brunswick phonograph cabinets, Fisher Automobile bodies, and so on, used your buildings;

I would conclude that you make 99-44/100% pure portable buildings.

And some morning you'd have my orders on your desk for such portable buildings as I required.

.....

Now, put yourself in my place.

You are in need of dry kilns. You find that what I have suggested above regarding your buildings is true of BLANK dry kilns.

Isn't it time for us to be getting together?

Yours very truly,

THE BLANK DRY KILN CO.

The second stage in the sales appeal is interest. A thought that will make a man say, "That product could mean this to me," is the logical second thought in a sales letter. The letter quoted on page 141, "If you are interested in saving on wearing apparel, household furnishings, and home things, our January Clearance Sales will have a meaning for you," is pretty certain to appeal to the self-interest of women who are economical.

The third step is conviction. In this stage the writer develops clearly, definitely, and persuasively the dominant thought which he wishes to impress upon the reader. He develops it and proves it by means of testimonials, reasons, and evidence.

Finally, the action stage of the appeal is reached. The reader must be told *what* to do, be told just *how* to do it, and be made to act while his reason is convinced and desire is intense. Inducements of lower price, warnings to the customer that he may not be able to get what he desires, and other reasons for acting at once may be given.

The adjustment letter is built around certain psychological functions which have to be performed. The steps in the selling appeal adapt themselves to this scheme:

1. The reader's unfavorable attention has to be turned into favorable attention by conciliation.
2. His interest must be engaged by a proposal of recompense.
3. He must be convinced that the recompense offered is just.
4. He must be given some inducement to accept the proposal and to accept it within a certain time.

The collection letter likewise follows the steps of the selling appeal:

1. It tells the amount of the bill, what it is for, and how long it has run.
2. It gives reasons why payment should be made.
3. It makes a request or inducement for immediate payment.

**Planning the Letter In Reference to Effecting Selling Steps by Argument or Suggestion.**—The construction of letters is influenced also by whether *argument* or *suggestion* is chosen as the method of accomplishing the steps of attention, interest, conviction, and action. If argument is employed, the arrangement of material will differ very much from that used when suggestion is employed. The two methods are developed in Chapter IX.

**Types of Arrangement.**—Just as a motorist following an automobile route finds a much-traveled road a smooth one, so a writer will be more readily understood and agreed with if he will employ the well-known plans of arrangement in developing thoughts:

1. From General to Particular or From Particular to General.
2. From Result to Cause or From Cause to Result.
3. From Predicament to Remedy.
4. Parallel Development by Comparison.
5. Narrative Plan.

*From General to Particular.* From General to Particular development of thoughts is used in the parts of a letter where it is necessary to give a description or an exposition. The writer may be describing a book, a house, a machine, or a company. First, he makes an inclusive statement giving the general aspects of the thing to be described, and then he proceeds with details. The following examples illustrate:

Nothing quite so comprehensive as this text has ever before been written on the psychology behind advertisements that pay. It tells how to secure attention, how to confine it; its effect; how to control its variability by logical composition or mechanical device. It demonstrates the differences in attention value of isolation, typography, composition, page-positions, location of page in the medium. It explains the use and value of color and illustration, selection of trade-names, trademarks. It discusses proper copy for various types of appeals, how to test copy, emotional reactions to line, form, language, color, feeling as expressed by type-forms and their arrangement, method of measuring memory value of advertisements. It analyzes belief, describes how to create conviction, brings out the functions of the long and the short circuit appeals and shows the importance of group differences, age, sex, occupational, social, and financial.

Development by Striking Example is a variation of the type From Particular to General. It consists of giving concrete evidence as to the validity of a conclusion and then stating the conclusion itself.

Dear Sir:

NEW YORK WORLD, OCTOBER 17, 1923

**GOLFER HIT BY FELLOW PLAYER'S CLUB,  
DIES OF FRACTURED SKULL.**

A blow on the head from a midiron in the hands of a golfer while engaged in a foursome on the links of the Somerset Country Club, Raritan, N. J., yesterday, caused the death of Clarence E. Reed, thirty-nine, of No. 273 George Street, New Brunswick.

The accident occurred at the third hole when Reed, who was playing with Eugene J. McLaughlin, City Clerk of New Brunswick, and Howard Stahlin and James V. Harkins, city employees, was driving for the green. Stahlin also was driving for the green. After making his shot Reed dropped back to a position near Stahlin. He had left his bag in the fairway and stooped to recover as Stahlin drove. Following through, the heavy midiron swung well back over Stahlin's shoulder, striking Reed over the left eye. He dropped as though shot.

Reed was President of the New Brunswick Republican Club, prominent in the Elks and connected with the National City Bank in this city.

For Golfers' Policy, call or write Mr. Kearn J. Mullen, 75 William Street, New York City. Phone—Bowling Green 2120.

Premium—1 year—\$5.00. 3 years—\$12.50.

*From Result to Cause and From Cause to Result.* From Result to Cause and from Cause to Result and Parallel Development by Comparison are common in argumentative types of writing. When the plan of the letter is From Result to Cause, the result featured is some benefit to the prospect. The cause makes the result possible and seems to the reader sufficient to bring about the result. For example:



Dear Sir:

In 1923 *Vanity Fair* carried—

|       |       |    |      |                |             |
|-------|-------|----|------|----------------|-------------|
| 10    | times | as | much | men's clothing | advertising |
| 10    | "     | "  | "    | shirt & collar | "           |
| 10    | "     | "  | "    | men's hat      | "           |
| 10    | "     | "  | "    | men's glove    | "           |
| 6     | "     | "  | "    | sport wear     | "           |
| 3     | "     | "  | "    | furnishings    | "           |
| twice | "     | "  | "    | cravat         | "           |
| "     | "     | "  | "    | men's hosiery  | "           |

as any other monthly magazine. In fact, *Vanity Fair* led ALL magazines, monthly, semi-monthly or weekly, excepting only the Saturday Evening Post, in all of these classifications—by margins varying from twice as many to thirty times as many lines.

Why? . . .

BECAUSE *Vanity Fair's* power to sell the consumer is felt not only by the advertiser, but by the best dealers also. Hence, that simultaneous dealer and consumer response which makes the most profitable kind of national advertising.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) W. CLARK CRISSEY

Eastern Advertising Manager

From Cause to Result is presented in the following letter by a unique method, the form of question. The letter is built around the central idea: Because these advertising and marketing authorities write for the *Advertising Fortnightly*, it could help you in your classes.

Dear Sir:

Could such men as Bruce Barton, Earnest Elmo Calkins, and Charles Austin Bates help you in planning your class work this fall?

Would it aid your students if you were able to bring to them the advertising experiences of John Lee Ma-

hin, Robert R. Updegraff, Floyd Parsons, and William R. Bassett?

These men are some of the advertising and marketing authorities who will write for *Advertising Fortnightly* this fall, and whose articles lend themselves admirably to class work because they interpret the principles and policies behind successful advertising campaigns.

Several of these men are billed to address important advertising groups, but through the *Fortnightly* they will keep you informed of the most significant developments in contemporary advertising practice—a whole year for \$2.

A recent issue of the *Fortnightly* is on its way to you now. We hope you will want our paper to reach you regularly. Perhaps you may even care to suggest to members of your class that the *Fortnightly* will be a valuable supplement to their text book studies.

If you mail the enclosed card now, you will be in time for the important fall issues.

Yours very truly,

*From Predicament to Remedy.* The plan of development From Predicament to Remedy is closely allied to From Result to Cause. The unpleasant aspects of a situation are presented to the prospect, and the group of circumstances personalized for him. The particular product to be sold is then offered as a remedy. The following sales promotion letter illustrates:

Dear Sir:

YOU COULDN'T SELL  
ONE HUNDRED RENT RECEIPTS FOR A  
PLUGGED DIME.  
WHY ACCUMULATE THEM?

If you're tired of paying rent, there is a way out. Perhaps it doesn't involve so much money as you've

thought, and there are mighty big comforts about living where no landlord can dictate how you shall drive nails or where you may plant trees and shrubs and where you may make improvements that add to your own wealth—not the landlord's.

Then there is a feeling of independence that comes only to the home owner. Even the children feel the difference.

But of course you've been thinking about the possibilities of having your home, and we only want you to know that we can probably bring you closer to the point of actually owing it if you'll come and talk over your problem with us. You must consider the choice of lots, the decision as to what kind of a home, and the problems of financing. We'll help you to the limit of our ability in deciding whether it is possible now, and if so, how to go about it.

We haven't heard of anyone who started to build a home who was not glad he did it. Why not try it out?

Yours very truly,

*Parallel Development by Comparison.* Parallel Development by Comparison is less compelling than From Cause to Result or *vice versa*, but it is more suggestive and hence more valuable for any situation where suggestion should be used as a method for influencing action. It is used to sell products such as tractors, electrical devices, and office equipment which have supplanted earlier labor-saving devices. The main merit, perhaps, of this plan is that it usually begins with an idea to which the prospect readily agrees. The following letter illustrates this type of development and is worthy of comment for its succinctness:

Gentlemen:

As you walk home at night have you ever wondered why the street lamps gleam so steadily? Answer—an efficient machine.

Dynamos are efficient because they operate with the least friction possible. They give uninterrupted service at minimum cost, which is efficiency.

In packing your product this is also what YOU are striving for—uninterrupted service with minimum cost. And so we can help you because during our many years' experience we have developed waterproof packing paper to its highest point of efficiency.

.....

*The Narrative Plan.* The Narrative Plan of Developing material is growing in favor for sales letters and advertising copy. The love of a good story has not diminished with time. The simple narrative, telling events in chronological order, comes directly from the nature of material. It is used in letters which are informal reports. It is used to introduce the main argument of a sales letter as in the following letter of The Angier Corporation.

Gentlemen:

Day before yesterday I walked down Atlantic Avenue, Boston.

Just ahead of me a big six-horse dray, piled high with shipping cases, swung across the street and headed for an alley on my side. It wasn't much more than a hole in the wall, for the buildings were high, but with absolute unconcern the driver ploughed right in without grazing the curb.

That was efficient driving, and I wondered if the boxes on that dray were just as efficiently packed.

There is more to efficiency in packing today than mere economy in space and security from breakage, although these two things alone should occupy most of the packer's attention. The point is—he is FORCED to lack efficiency because he spends too much time lining cases by hand. That means hours wasted.

Open up for yourself this small enclosed Liner. The large ones look just like it. No cracks in the corners. A solid waterproof case with the sides bending over forming the top or lap. These Liners come to you carefully folded, same as this one. All your shipper has to do is open them, and they slip easily into the box.

This sample is made of SS33, the grade from which we construct Liners for some of the largest cracker concerns in America—both foreign and domestic trade.

But the only way we can prove to you that our Case Liners will save **YOU** money and make **YOUR** cracker and biscuit packing more efficient is to let you try them at our expense.

So please fill in this post card giving us the inside dimensions of your case, or cases, and we will send you a sample Liner—no charge—so you can see exactly how it works. If you want yours made of heavier stock, just check No. 2 on the card.

Why not mail it right now?

Yours for efficiency,

THE ANGIER CORPORATION.

In concluding the discussion of determining a scheme of arrangement for material, we should suggest to inexperienced correspondents that they would have less difficulty in determining a scheme for arrangement if they would plan for only such material as is necessary to the accomplishment of their purpose. It is usually much less than they want to include. The making of a series of topic sentences for a letter recommended at the beginning of the chapter limits the amount of material and often suggests a logical sequence for its presentation. For instance, the skeleton of the letter headed, "You Couldn't Sell One Hundred Rent Receipts for a Plugged Dime—Why Collect Them?" might read in the following way:

1. Are you tired of paying rent and desirous of peace and independence?
2. You can get it by owning your own home.
3. We can help you by showing you it is less expensive than you think and by analyzing your problem.

When the writer has limited the thoughts necessary to accomplish his purpose in the space between Dear Sir and Yours truly, he will experience less difficulty in finding good plans for their presentation. A part of his trouble comes from seeking at the same time both thoughts and the best plan of presenting these thoughts. Sometimes, it comes from attempting to determine plan before he determines material.

**Changes in Construction.**—Whatever plan of arrangement seems appropriate to the nature of the subject matter and best suited to accomplish the purpose, it should be carried through if once begun. If the reader has a logical mind, he soon discovers the writer's plan, and his thoughts function in channels similar to those of the writer. Sometimes, they anticipate those of the writer; hence, he is disappointed if the plan is not developed as the writer has led him to expect.

**Determining the Beginnings.**—After a writer of a letter has decided what specific impression he wants to make upon a reader, what response he desires, and what the main thoughts of his message are to be, he is ready to think about his beginning. If he follows this procedure, he will not come to a full stop, as he often does at the end of the first, second, or third sentence. His beginning will carry him over into the message of his letter. He will phrase his opening sentence with full consideration of the facts in the case, such as the length of time a product has been on the market, the prospect's attitude toward the product, and the kind of firm selling it. Consequently, his beginnings will be appropriate to both the reader's mental and his emotional point of view.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The essentials of good beginnings were treated in Chapter V.



**Determining the Endings.**—When a correspondent, at the beginning of the procedure of writing a letter decides on the response he desires from his reader, he also settles the ending. His only remaining problem, then, is to decide upon the presentation of the three elements: what to do, how to do it, and why to act at once. The elements themselves were treated in Chapter V, pages 98-99. A discussion of them naturally recurs under the discussion of the clincher in sales presentation.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE METHODS OF INFLUENCING THOUGHT, FEELING, AND ACTION

- A. **Argument and Suggestion.**
- B. **Analysis of the Mental Processes of Those Who Are Influenced by Argument.**
- C. **Analysis of the Mental Processes of One Who Is Influenced by Suggestion.**
- D. **When to Use Argument and When to Use Suggestion.**

**Argument and Suggestion.**—As has been explained in Chapter II, business letters generally have as their purpose the influencing of thought, feeling, or action. Sales letters attempt to induce people to exchange money for merchandise; adjustment letters seek to make satisfied customers out of dissatisfied ones; collection letters aim to revive in people such an appreciation of credit privileges that they will make the necessary effort to pay their bills. Even an order for merchandise is a problem in influencing action to the extent it attempts to obtain quick service with the best merchandise at the best prices. Answers to inquiries are rich in opportunities to create confidence in a firm and to present prospects or customers with courteous and complete service. And except for economic considerations in the case, the problem is not unlike that of inducing people to vote for a certain candidate, to attend a lecture, or to give to some cause.

Confronted with this problem of influencing people to think, to feel, to act toward certain ends, a correspondent naturally wants to know how to influence them effectively. He knows there are some men who seem to have a knack of

influencing people, but he believes that there is a scientific way of proceeding, based on analysis of what they do. As soon as he begins to study methods, his inquiry discovers for him that there are two methods: Argument and Suggestion. This he learns from his talks with managers of men. One group insists that the secret of their influence over men is appealing to reason; the other group argues that they influence by suggestion. Both methods are used, and often in the same letter, as the following effective letter illustrates:

Dear Sir:

You've heard the story, haven't you?

Suggestion: When asked how he found business, an authority on the subject once said, "By going after it." Isn't that the whole secret in four words?

Argument: Why not go after more of it yourself, then, through the mails? That's the least expensive way of doing it, and it doesn't interfere with your present method of selling. Nor does it mean changing over to a mail-order business.

Argument: It does mean this. You can add new wholesale and retail accounts to your books; you can dig more business out of those houses you are already selling; you can keep in touch with your customers and prospects between the calls of your salesmen; and you can open up live leads for your salesmen to work on.

You dictate a letter to one of your best prospects, turn it over to us, and we will duplicate that letter to all prospects for your product or service—and every letter will look as though your stenographer had written it. This letter is an example of the kind we can produce for you.

Why not get a line on what similar letters would cost you? The easiest way  
Suggestion: is to drop us the attached card, or, if you prefer, phone State 2853. No obligation whatever.

Yours very truly,

It interests the correspondent to know that both methods are used, that suggestion used intelligently can be a more powerful means of influencing men than argument. But he wants to know most *how* he may induce people to deliberate, and *how* he may use suggestion. Second, he wants to know *when* to use one method and *when* to use the other. He will gain this knowledge by:

1. Making an analysis of the mental processes of those who are influenced by argument or by suggestion.
2. Making an analysis of methods used to bring about these mental processes.
3. Constructing various arguments or suggestions relative to the chief elements: attention, interest, conviction, and action, of the selling appeal.
4. Considering factors which determine the choice of appeal, such as:
  - A Nature of the goods
  - B Nature of the response
  - C Nature of the prospect

**Analysis of the Mental Processes of Those Who Are Influenced by Argument.**—The mental process of one who is influenced by argument is known as *deliberation*. To make clear the nature of the process, it is necessary to make an analysis of such a typical act of deliberation as is involved for instance, in deciding between buying a \$1,000 Public Utility Bond or spending the money for a trip abroad. We deliberate, if reasons for buying the bond alternate in the focus of our attention with reasons for travel. Our deliberation is not unlike this when we are balancing the thought of purchasing something against not purchasing.

One characteristic of our act of deliberation is that first one thought occupies the center of attention while we define what is involved in one course of action; and then the other thought takes the center of attention while we involve what is in it.

A second characteristic of our act of deliberation is that we make a comparison of the relative values of two alternatives. We list advantages and disadvantages of both. The comparison consists in weighing the feelings of value attaching to the reasons listed; and it is, moreover, a conscious comparison.

A third characteristic of our act of deliberation is that we have a feeling of value attaching to each of the alternatives under consideration. Each of them must kindle in us a spark of enthusiasm, and make our faces light up. We do not deliberate so long as we are indifferent to the possibilities contemplated. If our consideration of buying a bond or of going to Europe awakens enthusiasm, no matter how faint, we deliberate.

A fourth characteristic of our act of deliberation is that we have an idea of the steps necessary to fulfill our desires. We imagine ourselves not in the possession of bonds in the abstract, but writing to the bond company asking them to draw upon our bank accounts for payment and to deliver the bonds to the bank in which we have our account. Or we may imagine ourselves turning through the various tours described by the American Express Company, and Thomas Cook and Sons, in order to decide upon our tour. We think of buying tickets, making hotel reservations, and boarding trains. The vividness or vagueness of our idea of the steps will depend upon our powers of imagination, our experience with past travel, or the explicitness of the descriptions of proposed steps necessary to be taken to fulfill our desires.

Finally, our act of deliberation is characterized by the fact that we make a choice. The making of a choice, whether as a result of argument or of suggestion, is a necessary part

of every mental process which results in action. To summarize; in arriving at a buying decision by the process of deliberation:

1. We define what is involved in alternative courses of action.
2. We analyze the values attaching to both courses and compare them.
3. We have a feeling for both courses.
4. We imagine ourselves taking the necessary steps to effect both courses.
5. We take steps to put our decision into execution.

The purpose of the following letter is to carry the reader through a process of deliberation and to secure his favorable decision.

My dear Sir:

The story is told of how Benjamin Franklin, whenever he had an important decision to make, would draw up a sort of personal trial balance, presenting on one side the reasons why his decision should be "yes"; on the other, entering the reasons for deciding "no." With every angle of the question argued out before him, Franklin could, without prejudice, let the facts help him to a wise decision.

When men, at our suggestion, apply that plan to the question of enrolling for the Institute's Course and Service, the result usually presents an overwhelming balance in favor of a positive decision.

For the sake of an interesting experiment, why not try it yourself? I'll help you. Let's consider the "yes" entries on your trial balance.

First: You are mentally capable of accepting the idea we are presenting, and of reading and mastering the material of the Course. The Texts, Talks, Lectures, Problems, Reports, and Bulletins are written in clear, simple language, non-technical and interesting, for business men, by business men.



Second: Your position is such that you can use business information to advantage. That is to say, you are engaged in a business that is being run for a profit. What you earn depends on what you know about your work. The more you know, the more you can earn. Accordingly, you are in surroundings where you can profit by business knowledge. That is exactly what the Modern Business Course will give you.

Third: You are ambitious to attain greater success in business. The Alexander Hamilton Institute is for ambitious men.

Fourth: You have the money because it isn't so much a question of "Can I afford it?" as "Can I afford to be without it?" Being ambitious, you certainly are willing to invest the price of the Course in your own future. And you can pay for it at the rate of \$10 with enrollment and \$10 monthly. Another thing, if you need more money now, remember that you'll never attain financial independence unless you take some steps to make yourself worth more money in the future.

Fifth: You have the time, because certainly you are not too busy to devote a few hours each week to make sure of your future success. You wouldn't put much confidence in a physician who was too busy to find time to read for fifteen minutes a day the latest developments in his profession. And if you owned a factory, you wouldn't appoint as its general manager a man who had no time to read about other successful plants.

It's a question of "making the time," and you can do that just the same as many other busy men are doing today.

Now you'll have to supply the negative side because, honestly, I don't know of a single logical reason why any ambitious man should deprive himself of this means of insuring his business progress.

Many thousands of men have testified to the sound value of this business training we offer, and the experience of thousands of those men offers overwhelming evidence of what can be accomplished in just a short time by preparation for opportunity when it is presented.

Analyze the question in the light of the facts I have presented. If you are the sort of man who is not satisfied with mediocre success, but is determined to fill one of the really worth while places in life, you'll not hesitate. You'll fill in the application and return it with your initial payment of \$10. And you'll do it today.

I am counting on hearing from you.

Cordially yours,

#### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS:

1. We define what is involved in alternative courses of action.
2. We analyze the values attaching to both courses and compare them.
3. We have a feeling for both courses.
4. We imagine ourselves taking the necessary steps to effect both courses.
5. We take steps to put our decision into execution.

#### CONCRETE ILLUSTRATION FROM THE ALEXANDER HAMILTON INSTITUTE LETTER:

1. The question is one of enrolling or not enrolling in the Institute's course.
2. The reader is invited to present in parallel columns the reasons for saying "yes" and for saying "no."
3. Reasons for enrolling are given. The reader is invited to think of the loss involved in not enrolling.
4. Money is mentioned. Time is mentioned.
5. "You'll fill in the application and return it with your initial payment of \$10. And you'll do it today."

**Argument.**—The method by which these five essential elements of the deliberative process are produced is called argument, or the reason-why appeal. The steps taken to produce them are:

1. Causing the prospect to form conceptions of a class of things which result habitually in favorable action; in other words, creating a standard of comparison for products in question.
2. Causing the prospect to classify the product in a group of things which always result in favorable action; or showing that the product, judged by the standard of comparison, is superior.
3. Causing the prospect to see the way to secure the product, and giving him an incentive for immediate action.

Letters in which the sales appeal is developed by argument omit the first step if the public is accustomed to use the type of product in question. An analysis of the following letter, for example, shows that the first step is omitted for this reason. It also shows how arguments may be constructed step by step in accordance with the method outlined above.

Gentlemen:

When you deliver merchandise to your customer, it is your desire that it will be *received in good condition.*

Standard: How can you insure *delivery in perfect condition* in any better way than by having your merchandise wrapped in a strong, flexible paper like the sample of BLANK Kraft we are enclosing?

Comparison: BLANK Kraft is, we believe, the strongest for weight of any paper on the market today, and in so far as paper can, it insures perfect delivery.

We wish that you would test the sample, and we feel sure that you will be

convinced that BLANK Kraft is all we claim it to be. Not only does its strength commend it to the discriminating user, but its beautiful, golden russet color adds to the appearance of the package.

Action:

We are confident that if you will place a trial order for BLANK Kraft with your paper dealer, we shall be able to count you as a regular, and what is more important to both of us, a satisfied user.

Very truly yours,

1. Create idea of value or educate your prospect to accept the use of your type of product.
2. Call to mind a class of things toward which favorable action is habitual, and make the central selling point of your article the standard of comparison.
3. Classify your product with this group or show that the product, judged by this standard of comparison, is superior.
4. Show the prospect how to act in accordance with his usual habit of purchasing things of this class.
5. Give him an incentive for acting at once.
1. When you deliver merchandise to a customer, you want it to be received in perfect condition.
2. To insure delivery of merchandise in *perfect condition*, you want a *strong, flexible paper*.
3. Blank Kraft is the strongest for weight of any paper on the market today.
4. You can place a trial order with your paper dealer at any time.
5. If you will place your order, we will be able to count on you as a satisfied customer.

## How the Reason-Why Appeal is Constructed With Relation to Attention, Interest, Conviction, and Action.

—The essential steps of argument to induce deliberation, known as the reason-why appeal, correlate directly with the steps of the sales appeal, as the twofold analysis of the following letter will show:

Dear Sir:

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                            |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attention: | <p>You appreciate, of course, how necessary it is for every man teaching business subjects to keep in close touch with the <i>important developments in modern administrative policies and methods</i>. Perhaps you have felt a need for a <i>sound plan that would accomplish this liaison effectively with the proper economy of your time</i>.</p> | <p>Class of things toward which action is always favorable. Creation of idea of value.</p> |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                   |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interest: | <p>We would like to suggest such a plan to you. Monroe Jones Shane, Director of the Department of Journalism, Vegas University, Roy A. Nester, Associate Professor of Accounting, South Bend University, and Bernard H. Jordan, Professor of Business Administration, Baden University, are editing a magazine that will give you each month an authoritative presentation of the significant developments in modern business-PERSPECTIVE, the Journal of Business Analysis and Control.</p> | <p>Classification of product with habitually valuable things.</p> |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|

The October number of PERSPECTIVE is now

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                              |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Proof:             | ready. It contains several                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                              |
| Evidence of value: | articles that may be specially helpful to you. Among these, for example, we might specify: "Principles of Practical Organization," by A. M. Jacobie of the Standard Products Company, New York; "Solving the Problem of Seasonal Goods," by Harold N. Atkins, of the University of the West; and "Prevention of Labor Turnover," by Jerome Kagey, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Personal Research, Huston Institute of Technology, Chicago.        | Adequate idea of the product.                                                                |
| Persuasion:        | A subscription to PERSPECTIVE brings you every month a personal copy on which (1) <i>you may make such marginal notes and comments as you wish</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 1. Adequate idea personalized.                                                               |
| Clincher           | and which can be kept conveniently at hand for reading and reference.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                              |
| Inducement:        | (2) The usual subscription price is \$5.00, but you are entitled to our educational discount of 20% which makes the price to you \$4. (3) Send us the enclosed postcard, and the October issue will promptly be forwarded to you, together with invoice for a year's subscription. (4) <i>If the magazine satisfies you, send us your remittance. Otherwise, merely notify us within ten days, and your subscription will be cancelled.</i> <sup>1</sup> | 2. Details of How to Purchase.<br>3. Incentive.<br>4. Re-statement of Central Selling Point. |

<sup>1</sup>Adaption of a sales letter for a magazine.



**Analysis of the Mental Processes of One Who is Influenced by Suggestion.**—It must be pointed out that the letter which aims to engage emotions as well as the reason is more effective than one which seeks merely to convince the intellect. To make a man act, he must be made to *want* to act, as well as shown that he *ought* to act. The mental process by which a person reaches a decision when he does not weigh advantages against disadvantages but acts somewhat impulsively, is known as *suggestion*. It is used in the following letter to promote the sale of cement for various types of buildings:

Dear Sir:

#### HOW TO "BEAT OUT" THE MERCURY NEXT SUMMER.

Next New Year's Day, when the temperature is ten degrees below zero, and you have twelve inches of ice on the pond or creek and some idle time on your hands—won't you be wishing that you had built that ice house big enough to store all you could possibly use in the dairy and kitchen through the entire Summer.

You're lots more certain of profits from milk or cream if you have plenty of ice. You'll enjoy cold drinks, and you can have ice cream any day you want—unless you put off building that ice house another year.

Ice storage consists of just four walls—no floor except mother earth, a roof, doors, and a ventilator. Sawdust for packing doesn't cost very much. You can build walls of concrete blocks—monolithic, concrete, or frame. It can be the least expensive building on your farm, and yet it will have considerable influence on your dairy profits and on your wife's disposition.

No one goes without ice in the cities. Why should you?

Yours very truly,

The writer of the letter supplements his argument by such suggestions as: "You'll enjoy cold drinks, and you can have ice cream any day you want it—unless you put off building that ice house another year" and "No one goes without ice in the cities. Why should you?"

In order to understand the nature of suggestion as a mental process, we must quit thinking of ideas as inert things regulated by the will, and realize that every idea is more or less dynamic; that is, every idea of action will result in action if not impeded by another idea or a physical obstacle. This is the reason that we keep still about ideas which we do not wish other people to act upon. We say, "We do not want to put this idea into his head." We must also understand that people have certain psychical dispositions resulting from the experience of their ancestors and modified by their own experiences, which furnish them with tendencies to react in certain ways whenever the right stimuli are supplied.

A knowledge of human instincts is necessary if the method of suggestion is to be used at all intelligently. The tendencies making up man's psychical disposition, or the racial memory, have been variously classified under such fundamental instincts as self-preservation, ambition, fear, love, and hunger; or work, play, worship, and love. Any classification of instincts, however, is unsatisfactory because emotions are complex. The main thing is to realize that such instincts as fear, pride, and love are strong emotions that can be awakened by the right stimulus, and, being stimulated, result in acts. Reason does not enter decisively into the matter.

Paragraphs constructed by correspondents to appeal to some instinct which will lead directly to the purchase of an article are frequent in sales letters.

Appeal to Pride: There is a certain well-deserved degree of satisfaction in putting your signature below a well written letter.

Appeal to Fear: There is a fire every minute in the United States, devastating properties and businesses that have taken decades—even centuries—to build up.

Appeal to Fear: As we watch a fire we invariably ask, 'Has the owner insurance?' Being assured that he has, we say to ourselves, 'Well, he is all right then.' BUT IS HE? Think of the records upon which the continuance and prosperity of the business rests.

Appeal to Social Ambition: Of course I want you and the rest of the Elect Few who can think for themselves to stay with us—we need you.

Appeal to Devotion: Every mother's natural pride in her boy's appearance will lead her to approve these smart suits and overcoats we have provided for Fall and Winter wear.

The following letter illustrates the extended use of suggestion:

Dear Sir:

Remember your first trip to Catalina?

Remember the ocean breeze and the flying fish? Remember Avalon harbor, how colorful and busy—yet restful—it appeared on that day? Remember the anticipation with which you awaited your first trip in the glass-bottom boat? And the thrill that came with your first sight of the brightly colored fish, the deep under-sea canyons, and the swaying kelp? At night—do you remember the cool, clear evenings and the lights on the bay?

Remember the cool canvas houses at Island Villa?

An ideal place to spend the Fourth!

All the old wonders are at Catalina—and more besides. Enjoy the trip over on the steel steamer *Avalon*; take the flying fish trip at night on the *Betty O*. You cannot imagine the beauty of the submarine gardens at night—lit with the powerful lights from the glass-bottom boats.

Come over Saturday morning; return Monday night. The Wilmington Transportation Company's three boats will be at your service at all hours.

And stay at Island Villa.

You will find that we have the same reasonable rates and the same good service for which we have always been famous.

You can make reservations now, at the Pacific Electric Building—where you buy your tickets.

Very truly yours,

The problem of making suggestion effective is of vital interest to a correspondent, for he realizes that the average man acts more frequently on impulse than from deliberation. The use of the short-circuit (suggestive method of influencing action) appeal involves the following principles of suggestion:

1. An idea of action is implanted in the mind.
2. The idea arouses feelings which tend to expression in non-voluntary action.
3. No alternative action is allowed to enter the mind.
4. A direct stimulus to act incites an immediate response.

An analysis of the letter quoted above shows the steps of the suggestive method necessary to bring about the mental processes which result in actions on impulse:

#### AIMS OF THE SUGGESTIVE METHOD:

1. To make the prospect aware of an emotional desire; or to implant an idea of action.

#### CONCRETE MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING AIMS:

1. "Remember your first trip to Catalina?"  
"Remember the ocean breeze and the flying fish? Remember Avalon harbor, how colorful and busy—yet restful—it appeared . . . etc."

- |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>2. To cause the prospect to link your product to his desire.</p>                                                          | <p>2. "An ideal place to spend the Fourth!"<br/>"Come over Saturday morning; return Monday night. The Wilmington Transportation Company's three boats will be at your service at all hours."</p>                                   |
| <p>3. To cause him instinctively to gratify his desire by pointing out the way and supplying the impulse to act at once.</p> | <p>3. "You will find that we have the same reasonable rates and the same good service for which we have always been famous."<br/>"You can make reservations now, at the Pacific Electric Building—where you buy your tickets."</p> |

The effectiveness of the letter is due to the awakening of a pleasant memory, making it vivid with details, and centering attention on these details to the exclusion of any impeding thoughts. When feelings have been aroused to the point at which they become tendencies to act, the way to act is outlined, and the urge is supplied by the phrase, "You can make reservations now."

How the short-circuit appeal may be constructed to correlate with the steps of the selling appeal is illustrated by the analysis of the following letter:

My dear Sir:

|                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Attention:<br/>Description<br/>of nature of<br/>material:</p> | <p>Do you remember, when you were just a kid, how "tickled" you were to see Dad Prospect is coming down the lane with made aware a big bucket full of home- of an emo- made sorghum — how you tional desire. could hardly wait until you could eat some of it on those delicious sour-milk pan-</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

cakes? Oh, couldn't Mother make those "good"? And didn't that sorghum give them just the best taste possible?

Of course you remember.  
 Interest: And wouldn't it be great if  
 E m o t i o n you could sit down at the P r o s p e c t  
 c o n t e m - breakfast table tomorrow conceives of  
 p l a t e d i s and see before you some of desire being  
 p e r s o n - those *delicious* pancakes and fulfilled.  
 a l i z e d : a big container filled with  
 just that old-fashioned kind  
 of sorghum?

You can have that same  
 kind of an appetizing break-  
 fast every morning if you  
 Proof: keep CAMEL'S PURE Desire is di-  
 Standard of SORGHUM in your cup- rected to the  
 comparison: board. This CAMEL'S particular  
 SORGHUM is *made exactly*  
*as your Dad and Mother*  
*made it—just "that delicious*  
*and pure."* product.

If you would just step into  
 your grocer's store and get  
 a jar of this, tomorrow M e a n s by  
 Action: morning you could have that w h i c h the  
 breakfast that you have been product may  
 waiting for so long—CAM- be secured.  
 EL'S PURE SORGHUM.

Yours very truly,

**When to Use Argument and When to Use Suggestion.**—Aside from the facts that some men are more sensitive to suggestion than others, that all men vary in degrees of suggestibility at different times, and that some men use one method more successfully than the other, certain classes of decisions may be secured more easily by one method than by



the other. Arguments, for instance, while used to make men deliberate, do not always produce a sale. On the other hand, products sold by suggestion do not always stay sold. There is an assurance in a choice that follows deliberation even though the ultimate purchase results from impulse. Suggestion, moreover, is especially valuable when there is a necessity for immediate sales.

Space does not allow a comprehensive treatment of all the considerations and conditions under which argument or suggestion should form the basis of a business letter, but such a chart as the following which President Walter Dill Scott has provided for the guidance of the business man, may assist the correspondent:

#### WHEN TO USE ARGUMENTS AND WHEN TO USE SUGGESTIONS IN INFLUENCING MEN:

Both Argument and Suggestion Are Effective in Influencing Men.

- I. Argument Preferred in Exploiting Any New Thing; Educational Campaign.
- II. Argument Preferred in Exploiting Anything Having Unusual Talking Points.
- III. Argument Preferred When it is the Exclusive Form of Persuasion.
- IV. Argument Necessary in Influencing Professional Buyers.
- V. Argument Sometimes an Effective Form of Flattery.
- VI. Suggestion Preferred When Inadequate Time is Given for Arguments.
- VII. Suggestion Preferred in Securing Action Following Conviction.
- VIII. Suggestion Preferred as a Supplementary Method of Convincing.
- IX. Suggestion Preferred in Dealing with the General Public.
- X. Suggestion Preferred for Securing Immediate Action.

## CHAPTER X

### PLANNING THE MAIL ORDER SALES LETTER

- A. Steps in Making the Plan.
- B. Determining the Desired Response.
- C. Determining the Load Which the Letter is to Carry.
- D. Determining the Central Selling Point.
- E. Determining the Substance to Support the Central Selling Point.
- F. Determining the Means of Presenting This Point and its Support.
- G. Determining the Method of Approach.
- H. Determining the Close.
- I. How Purpose Determines Length.

The process of planning any business letter, outlined in the abstract in Chapter VIII, can be distinctly traced in the planning of the mail order sales letter. Chapter X gives a concrete illustration of the steps taken in planning this type of letter to familiarize correspondents with the method before they need to make application of it to the various types of letters.

**Steps in Making the Plan.**—The steps in planning the mail order sales letter are:

1. Determining the desired response of the prospect with full consideration of the relation of the prospect to the writer.
2. Determining the complete load which the letter is to carry.
3. Determining the central selling point.
4. Determining the method of presenting this point and its support.

5. Determining the method of approach.
6. Determining the means of closing the sale.

We may discover these processes by reconstructing the probable preparatory steps taken by the author of the following sales letter for a magazine:

Gentlemen:

In high hope we have written to you a number of times.

Just as often that hope has fallen to the ground.

Perhaps it ought to be dead by now. But it's not. It does recuperate.

What sent it up this time was a post card from one of you. This is what it said:

"I thought I could do without your old sheet. It always makes me mad, and besides, I can't afford it. But somehow I go stale without it; so send it along for another year."

Perhaps that's not much, you'll say, to send hopes up. But I think it is, especially the part about "going stale without it." That hits the nail squarely. Whether or not *The New Republic* is disturbing, it does keep the mind alert.

There are easier things to read, more comfortable, and more comforting too. But it isn't a specially good time to select them for an exclusive diet. Real work is ahead, and what promises to be the most stupendous four years. For it is after the battle is won that mankind moves forward—or back. And never yet has it advanced without the help of disinterested, independent thinking.

Perhaps you have wondered why we want you back so much. For one thing, there are so very few to take your place. Where there are thousands to read the popular magazines, there are not ten with intellectual hardihood enough to brave the reality of a New Republic.

But we need you for another reason. "Without public criticism," says Nevinson, "the State itself is in danger." Whence is to come the critical spirit if not from contact with such journals as *The New Republic*? To confuse criticism with fault-finding, as we in America have done for years, is to bury a great native talent. For it was the critical spirit of the fathers that gave vitality to the American experiment. To restore that spirit to the American tradition is the job of *The New Republic* and the people who read it. Kill that spirit, and you kill democracy.

We ask you to renew your subscription by returning this letter with your initialed O.K. in the margin. The bill will not be rendered for another month. Or if you prefer, send the money now, and let us celebrate your return by mailing you post free H. N. Brailsford's, "*Across the Blockade*."

Sincerely yours,

**Determining the Desired Response.**—Whatever the circumstances leading up to the writing of this letter, its writer first decided that he was going to try to influence former subscribers to renew their subscriptions. The decision may have come as a result of turning through the card files of subscribers and noticing how many subscriptions had lapsed. It may have come as a result of his secretary's presenting him with a list of former subscribers, or through a bona fide postal card carrying the message he mentioned. His decision, whatever formed it, has created for him a purpose for a letter, and he has taken the first step of the typical processes incident to planning a letter. But *to write a letter* to induce subscribers to renew their subscriptions is *not the message* the letter is to carry, but is the object which the message is to accomplish.

**Determining the Load Which the Letter is to Carry.**

—We may imagine him turning over in his mind possible reasons which he might give former subscribers for renewing subscriptions. Probably the first one which comes to his mind is that the magazine needs subscribers. On second

thought, he realizes that this is not a reason that will appeal to the self-interest of readers. That raises the question of what benefits *The New Republic* can give its readers. Recounting many specific services, such as supplying information on new books, on the politics of the country, on financial conditions, on world affairs, he sums up these benefits by saying, "It keeps the mind of the reader alert." This, then, is to be his message.

In addition to this message, the load of the letter includes his feeling about the message and the specific action which he wishes the reader to take. With the transmittal of his message must go the feeling he has about getting new subscriptions. We may imagine him saying to himself, "I want these people to feel as I do about *The New Republic*. I want them to feel that they cannot *afford* to be without *The New Republic*, and that *The New Republic* cannot exist without them." He will not transmit this message in its entirety unless he communicates this feeling as a part of it. Finally, he decides on the specific object which his letter is to accomplish. He says to himself, "I want them to O. K. this letter and sign their initials." He now has completely decided the load which the letter is to carry.

**Determining the Central Selling Point.**—This decided, the question at once comes to him, "How am I to make my readers think and feel as I think and feel about *The New Republic*?" The question is tied up with the attitude of former subscribers toward *The New Republic*, toward the writer of the letter, and toward the letter itself at the time it arrives.

Before he can take this third step in planning his letter, he must carefully gauge what will be the state of mind of former subscribers toward a letter from *The New Republic*. Will they be disposed to read it or to throw it into the waste basket? Are they likely to feel a self-interest in the message, or will one have to be created? Will it be difficult to gain belief? Will it be difficult to get action? The writer has to decide not so much what caused people to let their

subscriptions lapse as what their state of mind is toward renewing their subscriptions.

He reviews the circumstances in the case. His former appeals for the renewal of subscriptions have been without result, possibly on account of the readers' prejudice or antagonism, but probably on account of mere indifference. At least, he can safely assume that it was indifference, and seek to awaken the reader's interest, then, by trying to get on common ground with him emotionally. Leaving the phrasing of the opening sentences as a problem to be solved later, he now proceeds to consider how to arouse the reader's self-interest. For this purpose he can quote the words of testimony on the postal card which has just come to his desk. These words introduce the central selling point:

"I thought I could do without your old sheet. It always makes me mad, and besides, I can't afford it. But somehow *I go stale without it*; so send it along for another year."

**Determining the Substance to Support the Central Selling Point.**—Next, it is necessary to win the reader's assent to the central selling point. In seeking to win this assent, the writer considers, of course, whether he must change the reader's opinion, take a formed opinion and give it life and meaning, or whether he can count upon the reader's being in sympathy with the central selling point. He knows that opinions and sympathetic attitudes are aids, but they are not strong enough to accomplish this purpose. Some rational ideas are required. He, therefore, plans to support his central selling point by suggesting to the reader his need of keeping mentally alert, and his duty to the nation of keeping the spirit of criticism alive. The reader's past experience with *The New Republic* can be relied upon to prove that it does supply the means of keeping that spirit alive.

**Determining the Means of Presenting This Point and Its Support.**—How, then, shall he present this support for



his central selling point? He may employ one of the two recognized methods: argument and suggestion or both. When he considers that *The New Republic* has primarily an intellectual clientele, that his readers are accustomed to make purchases after thinking through their advantages and their disadvantages, he decides to make his letter substantially argument. When he considers that he must appeal to feeling as well as to intellect in order to get immediate action, he decides to supplement his argument by suggestion. He can appeal primarily to the reader's self-interest through the argument, "It keeps the mind alert," but he wishes also to make an emotional appeal, such as to pride. He does this by classifying his reader among the elect—in the company of rare superior minds: "Where there are thousands to read the popular magazines, there are not ten with intellectual hardihood enough to brave the reality of a New Republic." Then he will boldly link the reading of *The New Republic* with patriotic duty: " 'Without public criticism,' says Nevins, 'the State is in danger.' Whence is to come the critical spirit if not from contacts with such journals as *The New Republic*?" This should sufficiently "emotionalize" the message.

The method of presenting the central selling appeal has made easy the final steps in planning his letter. The giving of the tone of high seriousness to the whole message will do much to inspire belief. The argument is to be developed in a personal conversational way which is pleasing to the reader. The diction must, of course, have a quality of intellectuality and a warm feeling to remind the reader of the style of the magazine itself. All these considerations simplify the problems of the approach and of the close.

**Determining the Method of Approach.**—The question of the proper method of approach has already been partly answered. The analysis has revealed the attitude of the former subscriber to be that of mild indifference mingled with approval. The opening sentences of the letter are, then, to be phrased to take advantage of this attitude. The story-

telling manner, which always has more or less attention-getting power, can be employed here: "In high hope we have written to you a number of times. . . . What sent our hope up this time was a post card from one of you. This is what it said . . . etc." In fact, there is a certain subtlety here, in that the reader is not introduced at once to his own side of the case. His interest in the testimony of the post card leads him to identify himself with the writer of that testimony. In this way the central selling point takes on a personal meaning for the reader.

**Determining the Close.**—Finally, if the load of the letter is successfully carried, the specific means of effecting action will consist mainly of pointing the reader to an easy way to renew his subscription: "We ask you to renew your subscription by returning this letter with your initialed O. K. in the margin." The reader need not go to the bother of writing a letter or of filling blanks on a card. Incidentally, a possible impediment to action is removed—the necessity of paying at once. Present shortage of money need not prevent the renewal of the subscription, for "the bill will not be rendered for another month." The premium put on sending the money at once is then presented in such a way as to be an added incentive to O. K. the letter, though it is not an integral part of the deliberative process through which the reader has been led.

If the purpose of the letter, its complete load, is rightly conceived, if the attitude of the person to whom it is addressed is accurately judged, and if the attitude of the correspondent is correct, the other processes of planning a letter should present little difficulty. As has already been pointed out, the beginning should offer no trouble after the end has been clearly defined, and the way to reach the end has been definitely laid out. The beginning needs only to be direct and in harmony with the mood of the person addressed.

Analysis of the following letter shows how simple the problem of planning becomes when the end in view is clearly conceived and the conditions are favorable:

## PLANNING MAIL ORDER SALES LETTER 185

Dear Sir:

You asked for our booklet on binders. Here it is, with our compliments. In it the whole *family* is pictured—a particular type of Blank Binder for practically every record need.

When you buy Blank Binders, you deal directly with the folks who make them. You know right where to go to get *service* and *satisfaction*, without any third party.

You get a guarantee from us that will be kept; but better yet, you get a product which needs no guarantee. For 35 years we have been making "binders that last."

Our binders to-day will still fit the leaves of your first Blank binder, no matter how long ago you bought it. And very probably we can also fit the leaves in your binders that Blank didn't make.

We can save you money and effort by recommending the binders which will best fit your needs. We shall gladly quote you prices if you'll tell us your specific needs and send us samples of the leaves the binder must fit.

Sincerely,

1. Question: What specific object is the letter to accomplish?

Answer: To get the prospect to reply and to send samples of leaves for which he wants binders.

2. Question: What is the complete load the letter is to carry?

Answer: To impress the prospect with the firm's enthusiastic desire and perfect ability to give satisfactory service.

3. Question: What is the central selling point?

Answer: "Blank has a particular binder for practically every type of record used."

4. Question: How is the central selling point supported?

Answer: You get direct service. You get a guarantee. You get binders that fit the leaves you have. You save money and effort.

5. Question: What is the means of presenting the central selling point?

Answer: Use is made of the *arguments* of complete service, direct service, permanent service, uniform service, economical service, and ready service; and of the *suggestions* of cordiality, optimism, and alacrity.

6. Question: What determines the approach?

Answer: The interest which the reader signified by his inquiry is met by direct and enthusiastic response. "You asked for our booklet on binders. Here it is, with our compliments. In it the whole family is pictured—a particular type of Blank binder for every record need."

7. Question: What determines the close?

Answer: The firm needs specific information in order to proceed toward consummating a sale. Therefore, the prospect is requested to express his wishes and send sample leaves to secure prices.

**How Purpose Determines Length.**—The problem of adjusting the amount of material to the interest and patience of the reader marks one of the main differences between preparing for the personal interview with a customer and preparing to write to him. While his interest may easily be held throughout one-half hour by means of the personal interview, it can hardly be held more than three minutes by letter. As a consequence, the chief talking points are more carefully selected and hence fewer in number in the letter than in the personal interview. The length of a letter must also be determined by the nature of the subject. No one would expect to sell automobiles, farm machinery, or insurance by letters of the same length as he would use to sell pencils, fountain pens, and vanity cases. For the first

group, he would employ a series of letters; while for the second group, he might employ a single-page sales letter. While one article may be sold by making clear a few fundamental facts, another article may require numerous illustrations and arguments. These considerations justify a letter on pages 144-147 of greater length for a heating system than for one selling holiday greetings; but they in no way release the writer of either letter from the necessity of making adequate plans to prevent letters from becoming lengthy.

## CHAPTER XI

### PRESENTATION OF THE MESSAGE

#### A. The Whole Letter.

1. *Unity.*
2. *Coherence.*
3. *Emphasis.*

#### B. Paragraphs.

1. Definition of Paragraphs.
2. Classification of Paragraphs.
3. Length of Paragraphs.
4. Unity in Paragraphs.
5. Coherence in Paragraphs.
6. Emphasis in Paragraphs.

#### C. Sentences.

1. Designing Sentences.
2. Fragmentary Sentences.
3. Length of Sentences.

#### D. Diction.

1. Hackneyed Expressions, Slang.
2. Accuracy.
3. Appropriateness.
4. Clearness.
5. Charm.

The writer who has properly planned a letter, following some such procedure as was outlined in Chapter X, already has the key to the presentation of his message. He sees the letter as a whole, with all its parts in due relation. He begins, then, to write from the point of view of the whole let-



ter with a preliminary outline, a few notes on the main points in hand and works down to the smaller units. This working over is, of course, generally more important in form letters than in routine letters, but it always involves certain principles of presentation which may best be understood in their application to:

1. the whole letter,
2. paragraphs,
3. sentences, and
4. words.

**The Whole Letter.**—Every student who has read a textbook on composition can define Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis, but not every student has learned to apply them in practice. The dependence of unity on an outline was discussed on page 141; hence, it needs no stress here. If a student intelligently plans a letter, he is fairly certain of producing one, complete, unmistakable effect on the mind of the reader, which is the test of the letter's unity; if he proceeds without a plan, nothing that can be said here will help him to get that effect.

Coherence, however, discussed in the same chapter, needs more stress; it is largely a matter of skill in the fitting together of parts. Not only must the letter be planned as a whole, but also each part in relation to all others. Moreover, the relation of each part to the other part should be expressed. The mind of the reader may be guided from point to point by means of words and phrases called transitional elements. These—such as *but, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, as a consequence, as an alternative, in order that, so that, in any case, on condition that, disregarding that, if, if ever, when, whenever, where, wherever, and anyhow*,—may well be inserted in their proper places in the preliminary notes before the correspondent begins his dictation of the letter. They should not, however, be too conspicuous in the text of the finished letter, just as sign-posts for tourists should not spoil the scenery. They should do

their work without attracting much attention; in fact, the finest kind of coherence resides in the sequence of thought rather than in these mechanical means of indicating sequence.

So also with emphasis. An idea must be strongly conceived and deeply felt before it can be emphatically stated. But there are devices which will aid the amateur in making his whole letter forceful. Granted that he has planned his message in such a way as to secure unity of effect, and has related all its parts to lead to the one pre-determined point; it remains for him so to apportion his space that he plays up that point most prominently. This generally means saying more about that point than about minor points, but it does not mean using unnecessary words to fill up space. In fact, conciseness is one of the chief elements of emphasis, just as brevity is the soul of wit. By the same token, the approach to that point, from the very first word of the opening sentence, must be straight and swift and sure. Finally, when the climax of the letter is reached, the end should come quickly. A drawn-out ending ruins its effectiveness.

**Paragraphs.**—The subject matter of a letter is ordinarily split up into parts, or sub-headings, each of which has its individually important rôle in accomplishing the purpose of the letter. The form in which these parts are cast has much to do with the effectiveness of the whole. The man who gives adequate attention to paragraphs gets results quickly and satisfactorily because he gives to each unit its proper relative load to carry. The confusing effect of a letter which is not paragraphed is shown in the following specimen.

Gentlemen:

Yours of the 27th inst. at hand and contents duly noted. In reply would say same shall receive our best attention at earliest possible moment. We take pleasure in handing you herewith our latest rivet card attached hereto as per your request. Through an oversight on the part of our mailing clerks, the catalogue sent in compliance with your esteemed favor of the 12th ult. was wrongly addressed and has accordingly been re-

turned to us. Regret the delay thus caused, but beg to be permitted to say that we take pleasure in enclosing another catalogue herewith. At present writing we are unable to quote on roofing, owing to unforeseen circumstances arising in our factory, but beg to inform you that in so far as we are able to foresee, the old prices will prevail during the coming season. Whatever the case may be, we are pleased to advise you the quotation shall go forward to your address immediately on receipt of same at our office. Hoping this communication may prove satisfactory in every respect, assuring you of our best attention at all times, and awaiting your further commands, beg to remain,

Yours very truly,

The wording here is, of course, partly responsible for the undesirable result, but the lack of attention to paragraphing is the chief cause of confusion. By way of contrast, the great advantages of careful paragraphing are illustrated in the following letter:

Gentlemen:

You have not sent in your standard box for our quotation.

Why?

1. It cannot be the price—for surely you know that we can reduce the cost and build up your sales.
2. It cannot be that you are not interested—for who ever heard of a business man who did not want his business, his sales, his income to grow?
3. It cannot be want of time—for a mere stroke of the pen on our card, pasted on your box, would bring you a surprise.

Now, I don't want to bother you. I want to help you, and as evidence of this sincerity, make the following

unusual offer. If you will send your box to us at once, merely for one quotation, we will ship you absolutely free, six of our most attractive boxes for an attractive window display, and also suitable material for decoration in keeping with the holiday season.

Bear in mind: Our display will be furnished for your benefit. It will not contain our name in any form; the boxes will speak for themselves. Here is a real business getter.

Now, when the conviction of your need is strong within you—when it is your chance to cut the cost of your boxes—when there is opportunity to advertise—now is the time to send us your standard box.

Very truly yours,

**Definition of Paragraphs.**—Paragraphs in business letters are often mechanical and physical units rather than thought units. They are ideas stated succinctly and vigorously, not in any sense developed. In the following example, four such paragraphs are used to develop one thought unit.

It has always been the aim of the Jordan Company to give a dealer a proposition that is fundamentally sound—both from the dealer's viewpoint and from the standpoint of the banker.

The Jordan proposition makes it possible for the dealer to do business on a relatively small investment.

He doesn't need an enormous building, a large service department, and a used car show room that is bigger than the new car show room. He doesn't need a large selling force.

That means low overhead . . .<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, the usual paragraph of the business letter corresponds quite closely to the para-

<sup>1</sup> The Jordan Motor Car Co. Reprinted by permission.

graph units which printers formerly indicated by setting the symbol, ¶, occasionally within the text to break up large masses of type. Later, this symbol appeared only in the margin, and from the practice of writing it beside the text the word *paragraph* originated, which means literally *to write beside*. Finally, such symbols were replaced by indentions which broke the masses of type into units. The term paragraph then applied for a time to the indention, but has now come to mean the units of material. At some time in the process of paragraph development, authors began to make their own divisions of material in accordance with the thought units rather than the physical units which looked pleasing to the eye. The paragraph of the business letter may, then, be legitimately either a mechanical unit or a thought unit. As a thought unit, it is the development of a single idea just as it is in books and magazines; as a mechanical unit, it is an attractive break in the mass of solid type.

The word *development* is the significant word in the definition of a paragraph. Whereas a sentence *expresses* an idea, a paragraph *develops* it by means of definition, example, comparison, and contrast—terms which have become familiar in elementary composition. How a paragraph is developed can be ascertained by analyzing each of the following paragraphs, which illustrate a method of developing a thought.

You want to learn to play the piano, or baseball.

You don't consider the matter too seriously, but you don't just sit around listening to the Victrola and reading box scores. You begin to study music or the game of baseball. It is the same with all your wants. You take logical and immediate steps to satisfy them. That is everyday procedure. But how about this money business? You want that most of all. But what are you doing about that? Oh! Sure! You work hard and are honest, but that's nothing. Are you just working along in the same old way, trusting to luck and time to bring you all the money you want?



Let's analyze this keen desire to have more money.

As a rule, salaries are determined by the business position a man holds. Vice Presidents get more than office boys every time. That's sure, isn't it? Then, the sort of a position a man holds depends on how much he knows about business, and on his ability to assume and handle important work.

The paragraphs of a business letter are the result of a plan and hence differ from any sections of material which may mark the development of thought in personal selling. To the reader who has the whole pattern spread out before him, defects such as rambling, wordiness, and too great compression are more apparent than they are to a person hearing the same material in conversation. The plan of paragraphs is made, moreover, with reference to the comprehension of the reader. Each paragraph is intended to give him only so much as he can comprehend at a glance.

**Classification of Paragraphs.**—The paragraph of the business letter may be classified in as many ways as that of other types of writing. It may be studied as an isolated paragraph or as one of related paragraphs. As an isolated paragraph, it involves the same problems of beginnings, body, and conclusion as the whole composition; as a related paragraph, it is a division of the whole composition and may be classified as introductory, developing, transitional, or concluding paragraph. Paragraphs are also classified according to the rhetorical functions which they perform and according to the method by which they present the thought.

Classified on the basis of rhetorical function there is, first, the everyday expository paragraph which is designed to convey thought. It explains, interprets, analyzes, defines, and classifies. The following one comes in this class:

Why a Hoover? Aren't there many makes of electric cleaners from which to choose? Yes, . . . but only the Hoover gets all the dirt by raising the covering from the floor, striking it thousands of times with a soft bristle brush, and drawing out the loosened dirt by a strong air suction.



The following expository paragraph presents its idea by means of examples:

A penny will buy enough kerosene and enough lubricating oil to generate 200 watts of electricity with a Delco Plant. With 200 watts of electricity you can do any of the following:

- Pump 235 gallons of water on a 22 foot lift.
- Light one 20 watt lamp for ten hours.
- Run a 9-inch desk fan 5 hours.
- Run a washing machine continuously for 40 minutes.
- Heat an electric iron for 22 minutes.
- Run a sewing machine for 2 hours.

Then there is the paragraph of argument which attempts to prove something, as, for example, one which forms the conviction section of a sales letter. Its material is cause, reason, testimony, the opinion of an authority, and statistics.

There is, third, the descriptive paragraph which conveys feeling, rather than thought, and which aims to create a mood or an impression. Paragraphs of the descriptive type present details having suggestive value to stimulate the reader's imagination. Wherever there is an attempt to convey a mental picture of a product by means of details, the descriptive method is used.

Example of descriptive paragraph to convey a mood:

Just a glance through our book—"HOW TO MAKE YOUR FLOORS, FURNITURE, AND WOODWORK BEAUTIFUL," will make you glad you sent for it, we're sure. It is chock-full of time-and-money-saving suggestions. The index will point you right to that part in which you are most interested—your new floor or old floor problem, how to get a protecting finish on your woodwork, your piano, or your automobile—point to an answer to almost any finishing or polishing question you may have.

There is, fourth, the narrative paragraph which also conveys feelings, creates a mood, or produces an impression. Like the descriptive paragraphs, it is less logical in method and less formal in structure than the expository or argu-

mentative paragraph. In the story form of advertising, and in some letters, narrative method is used in paragraphing throughout. Most frequently, however, it serves as a means of getting the reader's attention at the beginning of a sales letter. For example, the following opening uses the narrative form to good advantage:

A boy once lived on a hill among the maples. Each spring his father tapped the trees, and the boy all day long and far into the night used to carry the sugar water to the big kettles where it was boiled into maple sugar and maple syrup. . . .

Paragraphs are developed according to the standard methods used in developing the entire letter. These, as explained in Chapter VIII, are: (1) From Particular to General; (2) From General to Particular; (3) From Result to Cause; (4) From Predicament to Remedy; and (5) Parallel Development by Comparison. Illustrations need not be repeated here since they may be found on pages 150-158. In addition to those just named, there are other easily recognized methods of paragraph development: Repetition, Climactic Order, Specific Details, Contrast and Surprise, and Parallel Construction.

Correspondents find that by using these standard methods of development as a basis, and modifying them, they can develop paragraphs limitless in variety, appropriate to every type of subject matter, and effective in accomplishing a given purpose. Yet the field for originality and taste is free and wide because the development of the paragraph ultimately depends upon the nature of the material and the specific object it is to accomplish.

**Length of Paragraphs.**—Length of paragraphs is a subject of much comment in business-letter writing. The tendency is undoubtedly to employ paragraphs of three or four lines. A paragraph thus becomes equivalent to a rather long complex or compound sentence. If it consists of simple sentences, each gives a portion of the thought in such a way

as to show some development. The extreme is reached when each of these sentences is paragraphed separately, as in the following opening:

You know it doesn't pay to buy cheap tires.

But it does pay to buy good tires cheap.

Blanks are just as good as any tires made, and a whole lot better than most. They are heavier, bigger, and wear longer.

These are not paragraphs at all as compared with the old type of paragraph of two or three hundred words, which was dedicated to the doctrine of development of thought; but they seem to get results. In fact, most business letters now have distinctly short paragraphs judged by the standard fixed in Barrett Wendell's much quoted statement dating back to 1891: "I may say roughly that a paragraph of less than one hundred words—of a third of a page or less—is distinctly short; and that a paragraph of more than three hundred words—of more than a page—is distinctly long."

It is plain that correspondents need some up-to-date test by which to decide the proper length of a paragraph. They, of course, find it to be a relative matter, determined by many things. One of the principal factors is the scale on which the letter is planned. For example, letters of three pages, written in answer to inquiries, may contain paragraphs of one hundred and fifty to two hundred words. A paragraph of such a length, however, in a one-page sales letter would be too long. Again, the nature of material determines paragraph length. The adjustment letter, because of its explanatory and persuasive nature, requires longer paragraphs than are appropriate for sales letters. Similarly for the purpose of making reading easy, a writer may break up a unit of thought into several paragraphs. He realizes that the eye takes in the pattern of a paragraph of three or four lines much more easily than one of twenty-five or thirty lines, and that many people will throw a letter into

the waste basket unread, simply because it is made up of long paragraphs which look unattractive, heavy, and difficult. The length of paragraphs is dependent partly upon the temperament of people addressed. The short and simple paragraph appeals to the man who likes activity; the longer, dignified, and conservative paragraph, to the contemplative and thoughtful man. Moreover, a reader's familiarity with a department of knowledge or the particular subject matter treated, regulates paragraph length.

Perhaps the *Zeitgeist*, spirit of the time, has invaded writing; at any rate, readers of today are accustomed to shorter paragraphs than those which prevailed in former times. They are, moreover, accustomed to shorter paragraphs in business letters and in advertising copy than in magazine articles and books; they have come to associate long paragraphs with reading that requires study and contemplation, and the business writer cannot afford to disregard the disposition of his readers in the question of paragraph length.

**Unity of Paragraphs.**—If paragraph units correspond to thought units, the principle of unity applies to the single paragraph. But, as our discussion above has made clear, in business letters a thought unit is often broken up into several paragraphs, and unity is to be sought not so much in each paragraph as in a group of paragraphs. We may remark, however, that a reaction against over-paragraphing is due, and we may expect future paragraphs to represent thought units. Such unnecessary divisions as in the following "commercial vers libre" will hasten the reaction:

If you were starting in a business venture—a business entirely new and strange—and

If you desired to avoid costly mistakes and make a big success, and

If someone who had been in the business for thirty years . . . offered to give you the benefit of his experience . . .

Wouldn't you jump at the opportunity . . . ?

**Coherence in Paragraphs.**—Just as the paragraph units must follow a logical sequence to be effective, so the sentences of a paragraph need to be in logical sequence to cause the least effort on the part of the reader in comprehending the message. A paragraph is effective in so far as a reader clearly grasps its pattern. For this reason, a writer gains by making his pattern mechanically symmetrical. He does well to make use of the principles of parallelism, inversion, and repetition, and to insert adequate connecting words and transitional elements. Without guide-posts, the reader may easily lose his way within a single paragraph.

**Emphasis in Paragraphs.**—Writers of effective business letters are always attempting to economize space and to gain effectiveness through a few simple strokes. For this reason, they seek such presentation of an idea as will give it emphasis. Certain methods have been found effective and have become standard:

1. Place important ideas where attention is naturally focused, i.e., at the beginning or end.
2. Indicate the relative value of an idea by proportionate space development.
3. Indicate the relative importance of ideas by their order of mention in the paragraph.
4. Cast important ideas in sentences of emphatic structure.

**Sentences.**—If we analyze the sentences in modern business correspondence, we find them to be of every description: short, long, simple, complex, compound, loose, periodic; sentences with the subject at the end instead of at the beginning; fragments of sentences; sentences that break off and are never finished. And we are led to ask, "Of what significance are all these forms? Why should we devise more carefully the sentences we write to customers and prospects than those which we speak to them?" The answer is that the idea which the reader gets, what he thinks of it, and how he feels about it, depend directly upon the character of the sentences conveying the idea. Carelessly constructed sen-



tences lacking crispness make hard reading; clumsy sentences distract the reader from the message; involved sentences obscure thought.

If we take any letter and revise a number of sentence patterns, we shall discover that every type of sentence secures a different effect. For instance, the following letter is diffuse mainly because of lack of attention to sentence structure:

Dear Madam:

When you watch the demonstration of a machine which you think the demonstrator is trying to sell you, there is a natural tendency to discount the statements and even the work the machine does.

You saw a demonstration of the Blank Vacuum Cleaner, but we are wondering whether or not you fully appreciate the economy and the labor-saving of this machine.

The broom will soon be discarded in the modern home as a method of cleaning floor coverings. This is not simply because there is an easier way to do it, but because the mechanical method is much more effective and better for the rugs and carpets.

Sweeping stirs up the dust in the room and fails to get at the dirt below the surface. The semi-annual rug beating, which is fast going out of date, proves that broom sweeping was only a half-way method of cleaning rugs.

There are many different suction sweepers on the market, and all of them have good features. The Blank is more than a vacuum cleaner as it combines the two processes of sweeping and suction cleaning.

While you are getting away from the old method, why not adopt the most modern and the most efficient? The Blank removes the dirt from the rugs, giving a brighter color, and preventing wear caused by the grinding of the pile between shoe leather and gritty dirt.



You can't save anything by getting along without a Blank. The longer you put off getting one, the more your sweeping will cost you in the long run. The sooner you start to clean with the Blank the sooner it will pay for itself. Just say when you want it delivered.

Yours very truly,

On the other hand, if sentences are clear, correct, strong, and readable, the whole composition will grip the reader's interest. Often such sentences save a letter which is unskillfully designed as a whole, the value of its parts compensating to some extent for its general architectural weakness. By striking out some of the phrases and clauses of the letter just quoted, and rewording it in a few places, we can greatly increase its effectiveness. In the following version, each sentence is constructed with reference to its particular place and function:

Dear Madam:

When you watch the demonstration of a machine, you feel a natural tendency to discount the salesman's statements and even the work of the machine.

You saw a demonstration of the Blank. Did you fully appreciate the economy and the labor-saving of this machine?

The broom will soon be discarded, not simply because there is an easier way, but because the mechanical method is more effective.

Sweeping stirs up the dust and fails to get at the dirt below the surface. The semi-annual rug beating proves that the broom sweeping is only a half-way method.

The Blank is more than a vacuum cleaner. It combines sweeping and suction-cleaning.

In discarding the old method, why not adopt the best and most efficient? The Blank removes all dirt from

the rugs, gives them a brighter color, and prevents the wear caused by the grinding of shoe leather and gritty dirt.

The Blank will pay for itself in a short while. It saves both time and energy.

When may we deliver your new Blank?

Very truly yours,

**The Designing of Sentences.**—Sentences which seem most spontaneous, artless, and undesigned are often least so; every ingenious effect is carefully planned. The plan, however, is not allowed to obtrude itself in the writing, and the impression created is that of simplicity and directness. Since in the business letter the individual sentence often makes the paragraph, and in advertising copy it often makes the headline, its construction deserves the most careful attention. A well-made sentence, which can stand as an isolated unit, is often like a miniature in its workmanship and in the intelligence, skill, and patience which have gone into its creation.

Opening sentences of sales letters, like headlines on news items, are written to catch the attention of a reader and arouse an interest in the product. For this reason, hours are often spent on the perfecting of an opening sentence. It should be revised, rephrased, and condensed until it attains the poignant form which will attract the eye of the casual reader; if *it* fails, the remainder of the letter is wasted. This is enough to suggest the importance of studying individual sentences to see the innumerable varieties of effects which are possible by altering the construction.

**Fragmentary Sentences.**—A sentence is usually defined as a group of words expressing a single complete thought. Grammatically, it must have a subject and a predicate. This law is violated in many letters of today, sometimes with impunity. The use of fragmentary phrases instead of complete sentences is most frequent in sales letters and advertis-

ing copy. Here is an example of the skillful use of fragments:

Snarling greedy machines. . . . An unwary operator. . . .  
The false move. . . . Then a huddled form encircled by  
white-lipped workers. . . . The clang of an ambulance. . . .  
A bed in the hospital. . . . Skilled medical attention. . . .  
The slow returning tide of strength. . . . A convalescence  
unhampered by worry about self or family. . . . Then the  
firm hand-clasps of fellow-workers. . . . "It's great to be  
back on the job!" . . . And you know he speaks from the  
heart.

This, of course, is not following the rules of grammar. But, judging by the results, we may say that it is justifiable in a case where the quick succession of phrases conveys emotion such as the completed sentences could not convey. The reading of such a paragraph is easy, and there is little danger of its being misunderstood. But fragmentary sentences are not always reliable; they are especially dangerous in the hands of inexperienced writers. If used for a considerable space, they become monotonous and irritating; and they should never appear in a letter which aims at perfect smoothness of style and complete clearness of thought.

Telegraphic style is sometimes the result of using fragmentary phrases instead of complete sentences. It is not only subject to the above criticisms but is likely to seem curt, suggest haste, and defeat the main purpose of the message. "No gentleman is ever in a hurry," runs the proverb; and no correspondent, busy as he may be, wishes to appear rushed. Putting in the needed subject for the verb, using all logical connectives, rounding out every period,—in a word, doing everything to make his sentences stand analysis, will take but little of his time, and go far toward winning the confidence of his readers.

So long as sentences are simple, it is easy to square them by definition; but, when phrases and clauses are built into sentences, then arise the questions of coördination and subor-

dination. Such a study of the nature of sentences becomes too detailed for the limitations of this text. For this knowledge, the student should consult a standard handbook of composition or an elementary text on rhetoric.<sup>1</sup>

**Length of Sentences.**—The present tendency is toward short sentences. One writer, who has given considerable attention to the subject, calls any sentence less than ten words extremely short, counts twenty words as appropriate to sustained reading, and recommends thirty or more words for the occasional but not the usual sentence. It must be remembered, however, that short sentences seem dictatorial and arbitrary because they allow no explanations or qualifying statements, and they become monotonous in long passages. They are widely used because they are adapted to the intelligence of the average reader. Long sentences are not only harder to write but also harder to read. They do, however, have the advantage of allowing greater variety, of being more accurate through the use of qualifying and antithetical elements, and of giving greater dignity to style. They are, therefore, particularly useful in answering inquiries, adjusting claims, and settling disputes—in short, wherever diplomacy is needed.

To avoid monotony and to gain emphasis, the sentences of a letter should show some variety in length. For example:

Dear Sir:

If you could throw a golden ray of sunshine across the threshold of the bluest day your wife and family will ever see—the day when you are called to the great Beyond—wouldn't it be worth while?

It will be pretty tough to face it all—without you. THINK OF IT—your salary ceases; your debts and accounts come due in a bunch; and maybe some unfinished contract or deal buckles up your finances for a heavy loss in the final liquidation of your estate.

<sup>1</sup> "Composition in Theory and Practice," Canby and Others, 6:116-123; The Macmillan Company.

For years you've met trouble single-handed with ease; but when it comes in bunches, it's made even you with all your shrewdness, financial standing, and prestige fight mighty hard to turn the tide. What chance, then, have your little family and estate when Sickness, Misfortune, and Death turn into the stretch against them?

There's only one thing that talks then. That's "Ready Cash."

To hold the necessary cash hurts your business, but to lay aside a little of your annual profits in a Bankers' "Special Estate Contract" helps your business, saves you money, increases your estate, adds to your financial strength, and prestige, and provides the "Ready Cash" to meet those obligations when most needed. Besides, it replaces your salary with a substantial monthly income, or even takes care of you in your old age.

Let us show you (without obligation on your part) how easily you can protect them and yourself under this most unusual contract. Just fill in the card and mail right back to us. It's post-paid.

Very truly yours,

Before leaving the discussion of sentence structure, it is worth while to stress the fact that business correspondents must always adjust their sentence forms and lengths to the temperament, education, and natural ability of their readers. The busy business man likes short, crisp sentences in general. The farmer likes simple sentences, and he will read many more of them than will the business man. Moreover, in their homes, men will read longer sentences than they will in their offices. The style of commercial correspondence lies somewhere between the thinness of talk and the compactness of essays. It is governed by good judgment, which grows out of a knowledge of the structure of sentences and experience in using them.

**Diction.**—*The right word in the right place* connotes all the rules which may be laid down for the use of words in

business letters. The faculty of choosing the right word is not, however, for most of us, heaven born; it is the result of study. It has its beginning in having eyes to see and minds to think. The usual writer of sales letters could not describe a horse so vividly as did Shakespeare because he could not see the details Shakespeare saw:

Round-hoofed, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,  
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,  
High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,  
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide.

Power of diction comes not only from having a wide acquaintance with words but from knowing them intimately, as did the writer of the following:

There are Ivoryless men in this country!

There are men who still go along from day to day deep-sea-diving in the tub for a sunken, slippery parallelo-piped. When they finally retrieve it and rub it heartily against their manly frames, it reluctantly deposits a thin coating that they, in all innocence, think is lather.

We want the attention of these men for ten seconds.

We want them to understand that real lather—Ivory lather—is a three-dimensioned product particularly distinguished by thickness. It develops as quickly as pride after a twelve-foot putt. It disappears in the rinse like a platform after election day.

And when the Ivory cake slips its moorings, it remains on the surface, to be recaptured on sight without a search warrant.

Give these matters a thought, Gentlemen. They have much to do with changing a Saturday night duty to a daily morning luxury.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Procter & Gamble. Reprinted by permission.



**Hackneyed Expressions.**—Any constructive discussion of diction for those who write business letters must be preceded by a wholesale condemnation of what is known as *business jargon*. And when we talk of jargon, we must distinguish between a living vocabulary that has been evolved for a department of thought, and a mass of dead or half-dead words which are not fit to survive. By turning through correspondence manuals of progressive firms, we can soon make a fairly long list of words and phrases which are condemned because they have become hackneyed. Here is a representative list:

|                                         |                                       |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| according to our records                | beg to present                        |
| advise                                  | beg to request, refer, state,<br>etc. |
| agreeable to                            | by return mail                        |
| along this line                         | communication                         |
| and oblige                              | complaint                             |
| are in receipt of                       | conforming to                         |
| as per                                  | contents carefully (or<br>duly) noted |
| as the case may be                      | due to the fact that                  |
| as to your proposition                  | desire                                |
| assuring you                            | duly noted                            |
| at an early date                        | esteemed                              |
| at all times                            | favor                                 |
| at hand                                 | former                                |
| attached find                           | herewith                              |
| attached hereto                         | herewith hand you                     |
| at this time                            | inasmuch as                           |
| at the earliest possible<br>moment      | inclosed or enclosed—please<br>find   |
| at your earliest conven-<br>ience       | inclosed herewith                     |
| avail yourself of this op-<br>portunity | kind—favor                            |
| awaiting your further<br>commands       | kindly ask                            |
| beg                                     | kindly inform                         |
| beg to acknowledge                      | latter                                |
| beg to assure you                       | meet your approval                    |
| beg to decline                          | of even date                          |
| beg to inform                           | of the above date                     |
| beg to inquire                          | of recent date                        |
|                                         | party                                 |

|                         |                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| patron                  | valued                         |
| per                     | via                            |
| prox.                   | we remain                      |
| re:                     | would ask                      |
| same                    | would remind                   |
| state (for say)         | would say                      |
| take this opportunity   | yours of recent date           |
| thanking you in advance | you claim, you say, you state, |
| to hand                 | you advise, etc., etc.         |
| trusting that           | your complaint                 |
| ult.                    | your valued order              |

Only too many phrases have been adopted from legal writing with no reference to their value in performing efficiently a service in business letters. *We enclose herewith, Your letter of the 10th inst., Contents duly noted,* are frequently used by correspondents to fill up the gap between their beginning to dictate and their beginning to think.

**Slang.**—Any constructive discussion of diction must also distinguish between the use and the abuse of slang in business letter writing. One executive says, "The continued use of slang expressions is an evidence of mental laziness, and I will not hire a man who depends upon slang to express his meaning." Another approves of the use of slang on the grounds that it gives a letter a conversational tone, results in fresh and natural writing, and establishes a certain intimacy between writer and reader. Such decided opinions indicate the necessity of some standard of value by which to judge slang. There must be some slang which can be used in business letters without reproach, some which we may regard with suspicion, and some which we should avoid altogether. However, this wide variance of opinion proves that standards for the use of slang in business writing have not been clearly formulated. Though standard dictionaries are as good indexes of the standing of specific expressions as we have; yet their comments are rather dogmatic. Personal views are likely to operate in forming judgment of slang, and these have little validity for other people in judging it. Perhaps illustrations of what seems to be an abuse of slang

in a letter, and of what seems to be a legitimate use, will give some indication of the standard of slang.

### *Illustration I*

#### WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

That's what the Boss said to me when I told him I wanted to write you a letter.

Why shouldn't I? For the last three or four years I have been chauffeuring a typewriter around this office, and all I want is a chance to show the alibi hounds here that I'm the shark's whiskers when it comes to writing letters.

That's that—and here's what I want to tell you about.

You know down here in the Tampa District of Florida the Boss makes perfectly grand cigars and we send them direct to smokers who are particular about their cigars.

How do I know about our cigars? No, I don't smoke them myself, but my sweetie, Bill Hand, who rolls his Rolls-Rough round to my place frequent and regular, expects me to bring him a box of our new cigars, IDEALS, every Saturday night. Bill says IDEALS sure make good on their name—the size (IDEALS are 4¼" long, full size, regular shape) the taste, the aroma, and the price are just right. Our Sunday trips are a total loss if he forgets to take his IDEALS and has to pay 8c or more for a cigar that chances are he won't like so well. For the rest of the day Bill's about as sweet as an alligator with a sore nose.

How would you like to be in Bill's class—about cigars I mean—and get a regular supply of these good IDEAL cigars? You can bank on it that Bill knows his groceries, and if IDEALS didn't have the stuff in them, he wouldn't be so set on getting his regular supply.

How about this same sort of service for you? You don't have to do your heavy thinking until you have

received and smoked four or five IDEALS from the first shipment of 100. If your taste doesn't run the same as Bill's, you can return the balance, and you won't owe us a cent. But if you like them (and there's very little "if" about it) you'll naturally want some more in 30 days.

Dont' hold out on yourself—fill in and mail the card (it's all stamped 'n'everything) and the Boss will send you the IDEALS to try. You'll be just as wild about them as Bill is, and besides I'll be able to show up the A. H. mentioned.

Gratefully,

TILLIE

SALES DEPARTMENT

P.S. Oh! I almost forgot to tell you that IDEALS are only \$4.85 per 100 (\$5.00 less 3% if you send check soon after you have received and tried the cigars).

### *Illustration II*

#### *Pulling for ideas*

At the beginning of the year, I'm wondering what I can put into the bulletins that will make them most profitable to about 1,500 readers. I want to put into each number something that is usable on the day's job.

You can help me. You have been getting the bulletin each week. You know the kind of stuff that is in it. And my hunch tells me you know pretty well what kind of material you find most helpful. If you'll give me some idea of what that is, I'll do my best to produce something with life.<sup>1</sup>

The degree of slanginess in the first letter is high. It presupposes intimacy between people greater than is usually committed to writing, an intimacy which perhaps seems more offensive, simply because it is put in writing. Although a person may be accustomed to hearing slang, it is not certain that he is accustomed to seeing slang terms, or that they

<sup>1</sup> American Rolling Mill Co., *Letter Bulletin*.

will be easy reading. One's eyes are less accustomed to the code than one's ears. Some of the slang employed in the letter is local; hence, it has a strangeness and unfamiliarity that deprives it of the zest it might carry for the employees of a cigar factory. Moreover, such an expression as "shark's whiskers" is possibly meaningless to many who received the letter. Some of the expressions, such as "What's the Big Idea," have been so much repeated that they are as palatable as warmed-over gravy. Certainly, the use of "sweetie," for example, illustrates slang which is to be altogether avoided in business letters.

On the other hand, the slang employed in the second letter is permissible because it is used in an interhouse communication where the intimacy of slang is appropriate. The slang gives the letter an informal, free, and easy tone, suitable to conversation and creates a favorable response in this particular case.

In general, slang should not be used in business letters so freely as it is used in talking. One of the indispensable qualities in written words is precision, and slang is usually inexact. The contrast between the dignified and formal vocabulary of writing and the vocabulary of conversation is as extreme as that between street attire and lounging robe. For the same reason, colloquialisms and provincialisms should be used more sparingly in writing than in talk.

Big words or pretentious words are likely to characterize business letters, with or without success. They are the stock in trade of the comedian, used as they are in the following passage to amuse:

IN RE:

*THE MATUTINAL PLUVIAL ABLUTION*

Sir:

As you know, the use of Ivory Soap for the morning shower bath, as well as for toilet purposes, is, among well-regulated homes, almost universal.

But, for your information, a home is sometimes found whose occupants are, for one reason or another, denied this Ivory luxury, with somewhat the following results:

1. Even a prolonged and acrimonious agitation of the soap at hand produces only a poverty-stricken second cousin to real lather;
2. The user often feels the need of a high-pressure firehose to remove the last trace of oleaginous film;
3. The inhalation of pungent soap perfumes frequently unsteadies the hand that signs the checks.

Whereas:

1. Ivory Soap clothes the delightful shower-bather from head to foot in pure, rich lather, before a magician could pull a brace of rabbits from a silk hat;
2. Ivory lather rinses with the ease and promptness of a ten-dollar bill departing from your wallet in a Broadway restaurant;
3. Ivory fragrance is as delicate as a breath from a new-mown hay field.

Next to air and water, Ivory is the very easiest thing in America to get. Indeed, *verbum sat sapienti*; which, being freely translated means, "A word to the wife is sufficient."<sup>1</sup>

Big words are to be recommended when it is the correspondent's intention to play the comedian like Ring Lardner. But the danger is that the reader will laugh at the writer instead of with him, or, if such words are awkwardly used, will be irritated and confused.

The significance of diction to us is that it goes deeper than writing. It reveals the range and exactness of our thought.

<sup>1</sup> Procter & Gamble. Reprinted by permission.



the degree and quality of our culture, and the soundness of our reason. It conditions, moreover, the clearness, the effectiveness, and the persuasiveness of whatever we write.

Not merely by learning what to avoid do we improve our diction, but by seeking fundamental principles to guide us in the choice of words. We find these principles in one of the best known canons of rhetoric: "Prefer the concrete to the abstract, the particular to the general, the specific to the vague." If those who write advertising copy for automobiles would hearken to this advice, we should have less copy in which we could interchange the names of cars without affecting the accuracy of the copy, and we should have clearer copy. The following two paragraphs lack clearness largely because of the loose use of abstract words:

The most brilliant record of motor engineering successes in history—in the air, in the water, on the ground—is the foundation of the superiority of the "6."

These achievements have given to your daily motoring, a new measure of performance and long life.

Is the "record" the "foundation" of the "superiority"? What is the "measure of performance"? Is "long life" desired for "daily motoring" or for the motor?

The concrete terms in the following paragraphs contrast with the general terms "achievements" and "measures of performance":

More than ever, now, you delight in its fast get away, its quick pick-up, its smooth purring steadiness,—and its great comfort for both driver and passengers.

**Accuracy.**—Accuracy is a quality to be intensely cultivated in the choice of words. But what is it? It is using language with precision. It is making words fit the thought exactly. It is discriminating between words producing effects just as we discriminate between shades in colors. Ac-

curacy in phrasing, as well as neatness, is apparent in the following bit of description:

Tecla Pearls

for the Ingénue

It is as if their round and orient beauty were intensified by contact with her ardent flesh—as if they borrowed something of the beauty that they lend, crystallizing in their ambient orbs two charms that speak as one.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of accuracy in diction comes from the nature of language. The language of people is a code the value of which depends upon their understanding it in the same way it is meant. Every person who uses words slovenly helps to ruin the code. He hurts himself, also, by weakening his power to express thoughts effectively in words.

**Appropriateness.**—Appropriateness has been suggested several times in this discussion, especially in the division under style, but here needs further explanation. Words in a letter are appropriate in so far as they are suited to the person addressed, the subject matter, and the circumstances. Words used in descriptions of merchandise should be on a level with the actual subject matter and adequate to it. Fords will not be Packards; bungalows will not be mansions; rabbit will not be sable. Advertising copy and sales letters become ludicrous when the diction is not suited to their subject matter. We are certain to notice the affectation in this copy for a medium-priced car:

Far beyond any previous high mark, the New Romeo extends and amplifies those superiorities of performance.

By way of contrast, the following copy illustrates diction which is in keeping with the subject matter (heirlooms of silver):

"Who were her people?" is a compliment that contains a touch of wonder. Back somewhere in the generations behind her were people of culture, who took trouble to de-

<sup>1</sup> Frank Irving Fletcher. Reprinted by permission.

velop a true instinct for the right thing, who cultivated a taste for discriminating friends, finer hospitality, worthwhile possessions.

So much criticism is there of the style and diction of business letters that a word of defense needs to be spoken in the name of appropriateness. The word "sell," for instance, has different meanings for different people. It has been branded as a "vile word" by a man who makes it synonymous with *get by*, and *cheat*. On the other hand, it has been called a word "full of poetry" by one who thinks of it as connoting all that is opposed to making people accept something through the use of authority. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has given advice that will serve as a guide to many a bewildered person attempting to change from a vocabulary suitable for literature to one suitable for trade:

Seeing that in human discourse, infinitely varied as it is, so much must ever depend on who speaks, and to whom, in what mood, and upon what occasion; and seeing that literature must needs take account of all manners of writers, and audiences, moods, occasions, I hold it as a sin against the light to put up a warning against any word that comes to us in the fair way of use and wont.

The wording of a letter is inappropriate only if it is not properly adjusted to the subject matter, the occasion, and the reader.

**Clearness.**—Clearness is the most humble quality to be sought in the diction of business letters. Its need is obvious. The more clearly we write, the more certainly we shall be understood. The difficulties of writing clearly come from failure to understand what we are writing about, from forgetting the limitations of our reader's vocabulary, and from neglecting the simple principles of grammar and rhetoric.

**Charm.**—To counsel business letter writers to cultivate charm in their writing may be a bit audacious; yet those who write letters are seeking day by day to influence people, and what is more persuasive than beauty? Brisbane has said, moreover, that writing consists of saying a hundred

words and making the reader think thousands. It is the power of the poet that he counsels. The poet and the business letter writer have this in common: both must depend upon the power of words to paint pictures, to convey feelings, to drive home messages, and to incite action. Effects which the painter produces by startling colors or sketches, the writer produces by specific, suggestive, and alluring words. Concrete and imaginative words have the power to fix attention—they cling to the memory; dynamic words have the power to impel action. Dealing with people through the mails, we come to know the value of words that have charm, such as are used to distinguish the following sales copy:

Orinoka Guaranteed Sun and Tubfast Fabrics have a story for Milady that beggars shop talk. They are beautiful—*yes*—with a soft, silken sheen that glorifies sunlight and lures atmosphere to any room. Their weaves and color combinations recommend their use in all types of homes and for every room in the home—*indeed!* *But more*—through months and years of constant use in strong sunlight they keep the promise they made in the shop. They remain a tribute to Milady's good taste in decoration.

PART III  
TYPES OF BUSINESS LETTERS





## CHAPTER XII

### LETTERS OF INQUIRY AND INFORMATION

- A. General Classes of Inquiries
  - 1. *With Apparent Sales Possibilities*
  - 2. *Without Apparent Sales Possibilities*
- B. Essential Elements of Inquiries
- C. Answering Inquiries
  - 1. *Uninvited Inquiries*
  - 2. *Invited Inquiries*

**General Classes of Inquiries.**—Inquiries which are sent to business firms are of two kinds: (1) those which result more or less directly from advertising, and (2) those which request information and advice, with no apparent bearing upon the sale of goods. The first kind is concerned with prices, catalogues, booklets, descriptions of products, questions of credit, service, and policies. The second kind may be concerned with anything within the range of human curiosity.

**Essential Elements of Inquiries.**—Whatever its nature, the purpose of an inquiry is to obtain definite, complete, and satisfactory information. Inquiries, especially those of the second class, should be so phrased as to be as easy as possible to answer. They should always be clear, concise, and courteous. They should generally make known in the first sentence what the question is. If the reader's self-interest is not readily apparent, or if the writer is asking a favor, the first sentence needs to make a contact with the reader. This usually involves some expression of the writer's reason for addressing the inquiry in the reader's direction and not somewhere else. No inquiry should ever leave the reader wondering, "Why ask *me*?" If it is in the form of a ques-

tionnaire, ample evidence must be offered to show that the trouble of filling out the blank will be justified. In fact, the problem of writing a good letter of inquiry, if it is a problem at all, is a matter of making the reader feel that he will in some way be repaid for his efforts to answer the question or questions at issue.

The following letter makes only a feeble attempt to make a contact with the reader before putting the request; it relates irrelevant circumstances which do not help him to answer intelligently; and it fails to supply the facts he would need in order to answer helpfully. The person who answered this letter either had to volunteer much information, hoping to give the right information, or had to delay his advice until he had learned more specifically what was wanted.

Dear Sir:

Your name and vocation have come to my attention through the handling of correspondence, and I should like to presume upon your good nature to the extent of asking for information as to getting into some other phase of correspondence work. Just how should one go about getting this training?

I am a dictaphone operator, and I am getting tired of the mechanical grind of this class of work, and should like to get into something bigger and better, where I would have a chance to expand. I thought perhaps you might be able to give me some advice as to how to go about getting what I want.

Your advice in this matter would be sincerely appreciated.

Yours very truly,

The request in the following inquiry is stated clearly and definitely:

Dear Sir:

Some clients of mine are desirous of getting into the oil fields of our State, and want me to look up the data for

them. We should, therefore, like to have all the data as to: (1) location of the different fields by counties; (2) number of wells; (3) production of these wells; (4) data on price and terms of leases as fully as can be ascertained; (5) number of wells drilled since the issuance of Bulletin No. 35; (6) and the location of these new wells with data on results.

This seems like a lot to ask, but I desire to get up a full report upon which they will base their operations. For that reason, I should like to have full data on the various fields and pools.

I appreciate very much all the past favors from your office, and shall be especially grateful for further information.

Sincerely yours,

Analysis of such a letter reveals three elements which are usual in inquiries:

1. Statement of circumstances which necessitate the inquiry.
2. Request for information desired.
3. Expression of appreciation for the favor requested.

The apology in both these letters raises the question of what people have the right to inquire and what tone they should adopt. Undoubtedly, a person who desires information should, before requesting it of someone else, ask himself these questions:

1. Is this information necessary?
2. Is there any way in which I can secure it without bothering someone else?
3. Is there any reason why the person from whom I am asking it should feel a self-interest in replying?
4. Am I asking an out-and-out favor?

If he decides to proceed with his inquiry after asking himself these questions, he should seldom write in an apologetic tone. He needs to put as much salesmanship into the letter as he would put into a sales letter. That means, among

other things, avoiding all negative suggestion. Apologies are likely to carry negative suggestion.

If the letter of inquiry is asking an out-and-out favor, the person to whom it is directed has a right to certain information, and it is to the interest of the person inquiring to give it to him. If the inquiry is for information of a business nature, knowledge of which might be used to the disadvantage of the person or firm answering the inquiry, the person to whom the inquiry is addressed will want to know the motive which the inquirer has, the use which will be made of the information, and the discretion and integrity of the inquirer. The part quoted below from a letter of inquiry was written with the idea of impressing the person addressed with the trustworthiness and integrity of the person making the inquiry:

My entire time is devoted to the study of catalogues, their cover problems, and the sale of Martin Made covers for catalogues only. In short, a catalogue department was created, and I was placed in charge of it.

It is a part of my job now to find out where the catalogue business is, and how to secure it. I am wondering if you could help me in this matter?

As you know, the catalogue field is disorganized in that there is no definite time for the publication of all catalogues. Each manufacturer has his own date. It is necessary for us to know when catalogues are published. More than this, we must know the *type of catalogue published, to whom it is sent, and what its particular purpose is.*

In some cases, the catalogue is used in place of samples to show the product, and in others, merely to place the product before the dealer to be used as a means of ordering. Each of these conditions presents a different problem to us as cover manufacturers.

So far the best plan I can think of for getting this information is to send out a questionnaire to a mailing list

of various manufacturers. Or, it might be sent to several mailing lists—each one specialized in a particular field.

Another plan is the formulation of a series of letters to be sent to these same mailing lists instead of the questionnaire. The theory here is that a reply might be obtained from a letter, whereas the questionnaire might be ignored.

It is my opinion that you can give me some valuable advice both on the specific questions I have raised, and in regard to the other sources of information.

Material irrelevant to the purpose of the letter is discourteous because it wastes the reader's time. For example, the explanatory details at the beginning of the following letter do not interest the person addressed:

Gentlemen:

My wife and I have been considering for several years the idea of taking a trip across the ocean. Now our son has just gotten married and has taken charge of the store, so my wife and I think that we can get away to take this trip.

Can you tell us what boats you have that go to Europe? And would you tell us how much it will cost to go to England? We want the best you have got and want to go in fine style. When will your boat be ready to go?

Yours truly,

There are times, of course, when the recipient has to be shown the bearing of the request upon his self-interest, and when it is unwise to put the question in the opening sentence. The following letter counts upon indifference and a certain amount of reluctance which will have to be overcome before the reader's interest is engaged:

Dear Sir:

Your interest in the subject of business writing and your experience in teaching commercial correspondence and administering the work lead me to ask advice of you in making plans to add an advanced course in business writing. We wish to plan a course which will interest juniors who have had the sophomore courses in commercial correspondence.

Please feel free not to answer any question if you prefer:

1. What is the difference in the content of your elementary and your advanced course in commercial correspondence?
2. What is the difference in the personnel of the students and the requirements for the course?
3. Is the elementary course under the supervision of the English Department, and the advanced work under that of the College of Commerce?
4. If you were building a course from the beginning, would you teach commercial letter-writing in one course of eighteen weeks or two of eighteen weeks?

I should appreciate this information very much and shall reciprocate if you will give me the opportunity.

Yours very sincerely,

Similarly, the following inquiry is built on the plan of a sales letter in attracting attention and compelling interest. Note the directness with which the questions are put, the economy of words, and incidentally the skill with which the leading words are chosen at the beginning of each hanging paragraph.

Dear Sir:

Have you ever prepared a questionnaire for dictators—especially to be given to applicants?



We have an idea it might be made a very interesting document to distribute to our customers and friends.

Do you think a series of letters in various branches of a business, to be answered by an applicant, would be all that is necessary?

Thank you for your advice.

Cordially,

**Answering Inquiries.**—It is obvious that inquiries which promise to result in sales are to be answered in accordance with the same principles of salesmanship as are used in writing advertisements and sales letters. It is not so obvious in the case of miscellaneous inquiries. All too often inquiries which seem to contain no sales-possibilities are answered in a routine manner as shown in the following letters from nationally known concerns:

Dear Sir:

As requested in your letter of December 19, we are sending you, under separate cover, a copy of our instruction book.

If you do not receive this within a reasonable length of time let us know and we shall forward a duplicate copy.

Yours very truly,

Dear Sir:

We regret to advise you that it is against the policy of our company to give out any organization charts.

We trust you will be able to secure a chart from some other source, and regret very much our inability to serve you in this instance.

Very truly yours,

By way of contrast, such a letter as the following creates good-will for the firm which thinks it worth while to respond heartily and helpfully:

Greeting:

Indeed we are glad to send you some of the blueprints of the layout of our machine shops and charts of the steps in the manufacture of our product, for we are especially interested in your plans for training your students in scientific shop management and production control.

Factory owners and operators, I am sure, will be everlastingly grateful to you for turning out students who can step out of the classroom into machine shops and factories and manage and plan efficiently.

If you would like it, I *should be very glad indeed to send you a list of the books on Shop Management and Production Control, which we have in our technical library.* We have something like four hundred books in our library, and naturally we are rather proud of it. So we shall be glad to pass along to you the names of the books that we have found especially helpful in training our machine shop and factory managers.

Yours for success,

THE BLANK COMPANY  
Correspondence Supervisor.

**How to Say No.**—One test of ability in a salesman consists in whether he can say "No" to a request in such a way as to create or hold good-will for his firm. And a firm is justified in protecting itself by refusing to give information which would entail considerable effort in its assembling, or which might be used to the disadvantage of the firm. Seldom does the public realize the full import of the questions it asks.

The secret of doing this tactfully seems to be to show by the tone of the letter that one wishes he might comply with

the request, while the message of the letter refuses the request. Sometimes the refusal is softened by volunteering some favor or service which has not been asked. Sometimes it is necessary to explain the reasons for the refusal, because decisions are more readily accepted when all the facts are known. The objection to making explanations about a refusal is that the inquirer seldom has the background to appreciate them. Usually a firm but courteous refusal is satisfactory. No hint of criticism should be directed toward the person making the request, nor should a firm regret its policy. Whatever the firm does must be sold to the other person.

It may seem unnecessary to argue the value of using salesmanship in answers to inquiries about products and prices, but many firms every day send out such sales-killing letters as the following:

Gentlemen:

We have your letter of September regarding solid asphalt. However, solid asphalt is never put up in anything smaller than barrels, and we do not believe it would be possible to have it put up in any smaller container.

Yours truly,

In this case, although the man who wrote the inquiry made clear why the smaller units of solid asphalt were desired, the answer did not help him to get what he wanted or to understand why the company shipped asphalt only in barrels.

Further evidence for the need of salesmanship in the answering of routine inquiries may be found in the experience of a man who wrote to 392 firms whose advertisements were appearing regularly in periodicals of nation-wide circulation, saying that he was interested and would appreciate further information. The following chart shows the number of answers received:

|                    |     |                |
|--------------------|-----|----------------|
| No reply from..... | 64  | firms          |
| 1 reply " .....    | 157 | "              |
| 2 replies " .....  | 92  | "              |
| 3 " " .....        | 34  | "              |
| 4 " " .....        | 17  | "              |
| 5 " " .....        | 10  | "              |
| 6 " " .....        | 8   | "              |
| 7 " " .....        | 4   | "              |
| 8 " " .....        | 3   | "              |
| 11 " " .....       | 3   | " <sup>1</sup> |

The following chart shows the time which elapsed between the inquiry and the first reply:

| <i>Days</i> | <i>Replies</i> |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1 to 5..... | 10             |
| 6.....      | 2              |
| 7.....      | 1              |
| 8.....      | 3              |
| 9.....      | 18             |
| 10.....     | 47             |
| 11.....     | 65             |
| 12.....     | 41             |
| 13.....     | 29             |
| 14.....     | 15             |
| 15.....     | 27             |
| 16.....     | 6              |
| 17.....     | 6              |
| 18.....     | 9              |
| 19.....     | 4              |
| 20.....     | 12             |
| 21.....     | 6              |
| 22.....     | 5              |
| 23.....     | 4              |
| 25.....     | 2              |
| 26.....     | 3              |
| 29.....     | 1              |
| 30.....     | 2              |
| 31.....     | 3              |

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission from "American Business Correspondence: An Investigation of the Correspondence of Four Hundred National Advertisers," 1921, by Louis Wann, Ph.D., University of Southern California."

| <i>Days</i> | <i>Replies</i> |
|-------------|----------------|
| 37.....     | 2              |
| 38.....     | 1              |
| 41.....     | 1              |
| 46.....     | 1              |
| 63.....     | 1              |
| 65.....     | 1 <sup>1</sup> |

The following letter from Kidder, Peabody, and Company illustrates the possibilities there are in answering an uninvited inquiry. The fact that it made a sale is testimony of the clearness, completeness, and the persuasiveness of the answer.

Dear Sir:

In response to your letter of April 9, we are very glad to send you a circular and analysis which we have prepared regarding the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

From this circular you will note that the Company is not only in a very strong financial condition, but that its business is so well distributed that it is not likely to be vitally affected by adverse conditions in any one territory.

At the present price of about 122½, paying dividends of \$9.00 a year,—approximately 7.33% on money invested—we look upon this stock as very attractive.

If you wish to purchase this issue, you need merely to write us, stating the number of shares, and we will execute your order at the best market price at the time it is received.

We will then send you a statement of the exact amount due including our commission which is figured at the rate of 15 cents a share with a minimum charge of

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by permission from "American Business Correspondence: An Investigation of the Correspondence of Four Hundred National Advertisers," 1921, by Louis Wann, Ph.D., University of Southern California.

one dollar. It will not be necessary for you to remit until we send you this statement.

May we have the pleasure of serving you?

Very truly yours,

Even the inquiry concerning something which the firm receiving it does not handle permits a business-building answer. If, through error, Wilson and Company of Chicago, who are meat packers, should receive a request about farm machinery, they would not answer thus:

Dear Sir:

We thank you for your letter of August 10, but we are sorry to inform you that we are not manufacturers of farm machinery.

Yours truly,

They would build a letter in this fashion:

Gentlemen:

In order to help you to get the information you desire about farm machinery, we have sent a request to McCormick Farm Machinery Company to send you descriptions and prices of their product.

We do not manufacture machinery. We are, however, sending you a catalogue of our products since sometime you will probably need some canned meats.

Your inquiry shows that you already know us, and we think we may be of some service to you. We shall be glad to have the opportunity.

Very truly yours,

**Answering Invited Inquiries.**—Prospective customers who clip coupons from advertisements or send inquiries as



a result of invitations given in sales letters have a special right to expect satisfactory answers. Business-building answers such as the following do not just happen; they are the carefully calculated result of long experience:

**Greeting:**

The samples and literature on Upson Board about which you asked in your letter of March 20 are going to you under another cover this afternoon.

When these samples arrive, compare them with any board you know of for strength—stiffness—hardness—beauty of finish. You will find that Upson Board is nearly twice as strong as ordinary wall boards; harder, stiffer, and more wood-like. More than that, Upson Board is surface-filled to make it cheaper for your customers to paint by \$5.00 to \$15.00 per thousand square feet.

You can increase your profits and sales in wall board by taking on the Upson line. It is not like soft, weak wall boards which might pull away from the nails. It is made of the best materials, and will not warp or buckle once it is correctly applied.

Upson Board will cost you practically the same as these less dependable wall boards. You can sell it for one-half or three-fourths of a cent more per square foot, but the little difference in price does not measure the big difference in quality. Your customers will be glad to pay more for Upson Board because they can save between one and three cents per square foot in paint costs.

The name of the Upson wholesaler nearest to you is given on the attached card.

There is evidence that in a firm sending out such letters some person of training and ability is in charge of answering inquiries. He is likely to be a man with much successful experience both in selling and in writing.

Whenever a sales campaign is planned and executed, form letters are also prepared to answer the inquiries which are sure to come,—not one letter, or two, but as many as the man in charge of the campaign thinks necessary to answer the individual questions which are likely to arise. Or, instead of entire letters being made up, special paragraphs are prepared which treat vivid points appealing to various types of people. Often, in letters built of these form paragraphs, beginnings and endings are personally dictated, so that the inquirers will not only have their questions answered directly but also feel that they are being given individual attention.

The old adage, "Strike while the iron is hot," applies to following up inquiries. An inquiry always signifies attention and often interest. But interest is a temporary thing. What may be at white heat to-day may be lukewarm to-morrow. The wise correspondent takes advantage of the fact that the inquirer has taken the first step in the right direction, by inducing him to take the second step without delay.

These answers are often in the nature of ambassadors to certain printed material, which has been prepared by experts who know more about the construction and uses of a product than the correspondent can know. The letter will then serve as a preface to the book and tell the reader what he will find there and why it is worth his while to look further.

Letters answering inquiries leading to orders, as the discussion thus far has pointed out, are essentially direct sales letters. A comprehensive treatment of such follow-up letters will be better understood after there has been a study of highly specialized sales letters. At this stage it is sufficient to indicate the essential elements of single answers to inquiries seeming to have sales possibilities.

The following letter from the Upson Board Company shows how thoughtful, enthusiastic answers may prove to the reader that the firm is really concerned with his specific problem. Earlier in this chapter an Upson Board letter

was quoted which was applicable to inquiries of a general nature; the following one answers a more specific request:

**Greeting:**

In addition to samples of regular Upson Board, we are sending you samples of  $\frac{1}{8}$ " Board and samples of Upson-Fibre-Tile.

Upson Board is made  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{3}{16}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch thick. The  $\frac{3}{16}$  thickness, however, is called our regular board, because it is the thickness generally used for the walls and ceilings of homes, stores, and the average building. The  $\frac{1}{8}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thicknesses are used mainly for manufacturing purposes.

Upson-Fibre-Tile, we are very sorry to say, is not made any smaller than the  $1\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ " pattern. The other size is the square pattern  $4 \times 4$ . But either pattern of Upson-Fibre-Tile gives an almost perfect imitation of real tile at only a very small fraction of its cost—about one-tenth, in fact.

Upson Board and Upson-Fibre-Tile can be cut to any size that may be required. As a matter of fact, we pride ourselves on being able to cut Upson Board into special sizes and shapes. If you wish to cut just a small quantity of it yourself, you will have no difficulty in cutting it with a sharp knife or a fine tooth saw.

Supposing you give us an idea of the quantity and size you have in mind, and then we can talk to you more definitely.

We are interested in working with you, and if there is any other way in which we can be of help, just call on us.<sup>1</sup>

Cordially yours,

On the other hand, the chilling effect of the opposite type of answer is illustrated by the following letter:

<sup>1</sup>The Upson Board Co. Reprinted by permission.

Gentlemen:

We are in receipt of your card of July 12 requesting details and prices of portable schools.

Enclosed is a brochure giving full specifications, plans, and photographs of our standard one and two-room buildings.

Hoping we may receive definite data from you in the near future so that we may quote you prices, we are,

Yours truly,

An analysis of many effective answers to inquiries shows that a successful letter may be built up by the following steps:

1. Turn the reader's favorable attention into interest by first pointing out how a certain feature of your product fills a specific need detected in his inquiry.
2. Follow with a description of the product from the buyer's side. Name in succession the fundamental impressions which the product will make, and seek to gain assent for each.
3. Describe the product from the producer's point of view, stressing quality, materials, and workmanship.
4. Center on one sound argument in favor of your product.
5. State your proposition clearly: Price, what price includes, terms of payment, terms of delivery, etc. Give any facts the reader will want to know before saying "Yes."
6. End with a specific appeal to the prospect's self-interest which will logically lead to action.

*IN ANY CASE KEEP THE DOOR OPEN.*

On the other hand, many sales possibilities created by good advertising and soliciting can be killed by failures in answering inquiries. It is done by:

1. Ignoring questions.

2. Writing a lazy letter: indifferent, dreary, dry, or stereotyped.
3. Misspelling names of people addressed.
4. Not personalizing a letter.
5. By trying to "pass off" a form letter as a personally dictated letter.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ORDERS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### I. Order Letters

- A. *Elements*
- B. *Mechanical Make-up*
- C. *Remittances*
- D. *The Hurry-up Letter*

#### II. Acknowledgment of Orders

- A. *Acknowledging the Initial Order*
- B. *Acknowledging Orders Which Cannot be Filled*
- C. *Asking for More Information Before Filling the Order*
- D. *Acknowledging Orders From Regular Customers*
- E. *Elements of Efficient Acknowledgments*

**Order Letters.**—Ordering goods by mail is usually not a letter problem at all; for most manufacturers, jobbers, wholesalers, and mail-order houses provide blanks which show the proper place to set down every detail. But when no order blank is at hand, or when there is any departure from the routine method of placing an order, then a problem arises as to how to write a letter to get the goods or services desired. Poorly written orders are certain to result in dissatisfaction for their writers.

*Elements.* As the name implies, an order letter is a letter from a buyer to a seller requesting merchandise. Its purpose is to see that the goods are sent promptly and that the order is filled accurately. Courtesy demands that the customer make the filling of his order an easy matter; hence a courteous tone, legible writing—preferably typewritten, and



a systematic display of the items of the order for ease of reading are assumed. It is to a customer's self-interest to make his order represent himself favorably. "Every sentence leaves its impression of your care or your negligence, your ability or your inability, your reasonableness or your unreasonableness, your courtesy or your crudeness, your sensibility of the fine points of letter-intercourse or your stupid lack of comprehension."<sup>1</sup>

Order blanks, designed for efficiency in ordering goods, show that details pertinent to the accomplishment of the purpose may be grouped under four headings:

1. Information concerning the goods themselves.
  - a. What to send: color, size, style, price, and number.
  - b. How much to send.
2. Specific directions concerning shipment of goods.
  - a. Where to ship.
  - b. How to ship.
  - c. When to ship.
3. Manner of payment for the goods.
  - a. Check, draft, or money order.
  - b. C.O.D. payment.
  - c. On account.

*Mechanical Make-up.* If order blanks are not available, the above details are presented in letters. Each item of the order is indented and written on a separate line. Care should be taken that the clerk can easily read each item, the quantity and price of each. A standard plan of arranging the details of an order may be seen in the following:

Hulse Bros.,  
16 West Fulton Street,  
New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

Please send us, as soon as possible, by American Express, the following:

<sup>1</sup> "Handbook of Business Correspondence," S. Roland Hall, p. 7.

|    |    |     |                    |            |           |        |        |       |
|----|----|-----|--------------------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|
| 12 | 26 | in. | Ladies' Umbrellas, | Fast Black | @         | \$ .75 | \$9.00 |       |
| 9  | 26 | "   | "                  | "          | Tape Edge | @      | .92½   | 8.32  |
| 3  | 28 | "   | Men's              | "          | "         | @      | .97½   | 2.92  |
| 12 | 26 | "   | Ladies' Windrella  | "          | "         | @      | 1.05   | 12.60 |
| 6  | 28 | "   | Men's              | "          | "         | @      | 1.10   | 6.60  |

---

Total \$39.44

This merchandise to be invoiced F.O.B. New York; terms 60-2-10 as your quotation No. 7632 of October 12. We note that shipment is promised within ten days of receipt of order.

Yours very truly,

Retail merchants and people dealing with mail-order houses usually send clear and complete orders because they have catalogues which guide them in giving the necessary details, if not blanks, which regulate the arrangement of the material. The orders which furnish the most difficulty to clerks who fill them are those from individuals to retail firms, or occasionally from unprogressive merchants to wholesale dealers. There are still some people who send out such orders as the following:

Gentlemen:

Please send me a one piece bathing suit, navy blue and white, four dollars; a pair of tennis shoes, price four dollars, size ten; a tennis racket, four dollars; and a grey sweater, price eight dollars.

Yours truly,

A clerk trying to fill this order would be in doubt about (1) the size of the bathing suit, (2) the style of the tennis shoes, (3) the type of tennis racket, (4) the style and size of the sweater. He must either delay filling the order until he writes for information necessary to insure satisfaction to the customer, or fill the order, and make mistakes which the customer might attribute to ignorance and carelessness.

The same order written to insure satisfaction, would read as follows:

Spalding and Bros.,  
Wabash Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Gentlemen:

You will find enclosed a money-order for twenty dollars (\$20) in return for which please send me by parcel post:

- |                                                                            |        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 one-piece bathing suit, navy blue and white,<br>size 36.....             | \$4.00 |
| 1 pair of white canvas tennis shoes, rubber soles,<br>size 3½ C width..... | 4.00   |
| 1 tennis racket, Number 9, weight 14 ounces....                            | 4.00   |
| 1 grey sweater, V-neck, size, 34, No. B 25.....                            | 8.00   |

These things are needed within ten days.

Very truly yours,

*Remittances.* Money-orders and checks are the customary means by which individuals make payment when trade relations have not been established. Checks are frequently used after such relations have been established. A buyer may have goods sent parcel post or express C.O.D., or accompany his order with a check or a draft certified by the bank in which he has an account. It is inadvisable to send currency unless the firm addressed has agreed to take the responsibility for it. The account on which the payment is to apply should always be stated in the letter. Enclosures should always be mentioned by "Enc." in the lower left-hand corner of the letter.

*The Hurry Up Letter.* The hurry up letter is merely a repetition of the order letter with information added as to the date of sending the original order and reasons which will appeal to the seller for sending the merchandise without

further delay. The reason for repeating all the details of the original letter is to facilitate the order being filled at once in case the original has been lost. If it were true that everyone ordering merchandise received the same service, there would be no reason to make self-interest appeals to get an order filled promptly. And because the life of a concern depends upon the service rendered customers in filling orders, a buyer can usually count upon prompt service. But when a customer thinks that his orders are being slighted while those of other customers are being filled, he may use, in a dignified way, all the power at his command to show how it is to the firm's interest to give him better service.

Letters making credit arrangements with firms, although incident to ordering goods, are, in function, credit letters, and will be treated more fully in the chapter on credits.

### Acknowledgments of Orders

The promptness and the spirit with which acknowledgments of orders are made greatly determines the volume of business done by a firm. The purpose of the acknowledgment, from the customer's point of view, is to inform him that the order with the remittance, if any, has been received, and that he can count upon shipment of the goods at a definite time. The acknowledgment is a legal acceptance of the order and completes the contract between the buyer and the seller. The acknowledgment, from the seller's point of view, in addition to binding him in a contract, is an opportunity to impress upon the customer that he is being given the service he desires as well as information about the quality of the goods, the guarantee that accompanies them, and the service that a firm offers. The content, plan, and specific characteristics of an acknowledgment depend upon the nature of the order.

*Acknowledging the Initial Order.* The acknowledgment of a customer's first order presents the most important problem in this kind of letter. It goes to a man who is

perhaps trying out a firm. He is in a critical state of mind which makes him sensitive to the treatment accorded to him. For this reason, a personally dictated acknowledgment is best adapted to him. It can be given a more personal tone than a form letter. It can be given individual attention. The customer does not yet know the firm's quality of merchandise, or its habit of standing behind the merchandise sold; hence he appreciates being told these facts. The following letter, which welcomes a new subscriber to a magazine, informs him of these facts.

Dear Sir:

The Circulation Department tells me that you have recently subscribed to *The Foundry*, and I want to extend to you a most cordial welcome into our family of readers.

I want you to feel and to know, because it is true, that *The Foundry* is your paper and that all of us are constantly working and striving to get and to furnish you the kind of information that will help you in your business. If at any time you feel that there is any way in which *The Foundry* could be made more helpful to you, I want you to write to me personally about it. I am always anxious to know just what our subscribers want and need in order that I may get and furnish that sort of information if it is humanly possible to do so.

Let me know what features of the paper especially appeal to you—whether there is anything that you would like to see added to the contents. And if at any time you have any criticism to make or any fault to find, I hope you will write and tell me so frankly, because the honest criticism of subscribers is the biggest sort of help to an editor in his efforts to get out a paper that will fill his subscribers' requirements.

In other words, as I said before, *The Foundry* is your paper.

Again thanking you for your subscription and hoping that you will continue to read *The Foundry* for many years to come, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Personally signed)

The differences in the impressions made by letters which treat customers in a routine fashion and those which give them individual attention is illustrated by the following letters.

### *Letter I*

Gentlemen:

We are in receipt of your wire of even date and are to-day making shipment of 30 pounds of our Special Salted Almonds No. SSB3 via American Express.

We will bill out tomorrow one hundred pounds of Soft Shell English Walnuts via the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad.

We thank you for this order and trust to receive the orders for all your future requirements.

Very truly yours,

### *Letter II*

Gentlemen:

It is with genuine pleasure that we ship your initial order for nuts, as specified in your telegram this morning.

Responsible names are always welcome on our books. Moreover, we wish to assure you that we will do all in our power to make your buying from us both pleasurable and profitable.



Your shipment of thirty pounds of Special Salted Almonds No. SSB3 went by American Express to-day. The 100 lb. Bag Grade AA English Walnuts will be shipped to-morrow by freight—Chicago and Northwestern. They should reach you in ample time for your holiday trade.

We specialize in high grade nut meats, and we pride ourselves on their freshness. We shall, therefore, consider it a favor if you will tell us if any shipment does not arrive in first-class condition.

We have some special window trims which will be of service in creating a demand for Brazilian Nuts. May we send you these? They're free—post-paid—for the asking.

We welcome any suggestions which will make our products and our service more valuable to you.

Yours very truly,

*Acknowledging Orders Which Cannot be Filled.* Often the first order from a customer calls for a certain brand of product which the firm cannot supply. It affords an excellent opportunity to build good-will, but it is by no means a simple problem. It is not a good plan to force one product or accessory upon a buyer when he has asked for another; but a bare statement that the firm does not carry the specified item only leaves him with his original desire, and causes him to go elsewhere. The firm to which he gives an opportunity to serve him owes it to him to attempt to satisfy his desire. It can give him so tactful an explanation of the superiority of its product that he will decide for himself that the article ordered is not so good as that the firm offers. Often more can be done by suggestion in such a case than by argument, and the arrangement of ideas is of much importance in accomplishing the desired purpose. The following letters show the difference between ignoring an opportunity of this kind, and making the most of it:

Dear Sir:

We do not manufacture Opatcho Gum.

We do manufacture Sticktite Gum which we think is superior to Opatcho.

May we have your order for Sticktite?

Yours truly,

Dear Sir:

While Opatcho Gum, specified in your order of the 12th, has probably proved very satisfactory to you for tread repairs, I believe the gum we manufacture—Sticktite—is more suited to your needs.

Opatcho Gum requires a forty-minute cure at forty pounds of steam, and because of its stiff consistency must be cured in a sectional mold in order to get the pressure necessary for a smooth and even flow.

Sticktite flows so much more readily that you can be assured of a smooth job with a portable vulcanizer. It is especially suited to repairing tread cuts and snags. Not only does it require only five minutes to cure, but it also enables you to be prepared for tire trouble at any time. Besides, it makes as sure and as lasting a repair as anything on the market.

For these reasons, we feel certain that Sticktite would be more satisfactory, and would serve your needs better and more economically. It is fifteen cents cheaper per pound than Opatcho.

May we send you five pounds of Sticktite on the terms mentioned in your order?

Very truly yours,

The beginning paragraph of the first of the two letters above disappoints the reader. And although the letter suggests an alternative product, it gives no constructive sales talk about it. The opening of the second letter creates the right

mood in the customer for reading the subsequent sales talk about the new product, Sticktite. Before he is given this sales talk, he is told frankly that the product he desires is not available, so that he will not feel tricked into reading the sales talk for another product, but will read it willingly. Only the facts that are pleasing to the customer and which work toward the accomplishment of the desired purpose are emphasized.

All acknowledgments of orders have sales opportunities, even though the writer through misinformation requests a product which the firm does not manufacture or in which the firm is in no way concerned, or asks a service which the firm does not give. The acknowledgment can always keep the customer's good-will by helping him to get the information he desires, and the good-will thereby created can be used at once to secure a reading of a paragraph or two about articles which the firm does sell. It makes the customer feel that he has made no error, and it will make him know where he can get certain products and certain services when he wants them. It may create for him desires which he has not had formerly. The following acknowledgment created sales possibilities even though it did not fill a specific order:

Dear Madam:

Your interest in our merchandise is appreciated, and we are pleased to inform you concerning our methods of shipment.

We do not send Merchandise C.O.D. to points outside of New York City as it entails unnecessary expense to our patrons. We cheerfully send merchandise for approval when a full remittance accompanies the order; or, if you desire to open an account, your application will be given every consideration upon the receipt of bank and commercial references.

This method of shopping insures absolute satisfaction, for we will immediately accept for exchange, credit, or refund, any selection that does not meet your approval.

Our specialized shopping service is unique. Your requirements are individualized and given the same attention that you would be shown on a personal visit to the establishment. In this way every facility is provided to make shopping by mail a convenient and an economical means of supplying your personal needs.

It will please us to serve you.

Yours very truly,

*Asking for More Information Before Filling the Order.*

Customers sometimes send in orders which do not contain adequate information. The purpose of the acknowledgment, then, is to get a reply from the customer which will enable the firm to give intelligent and satisfactory service. Costly delays must be avoided for both buyer and seller. The buyer's good-will must be kept. Telling him that he has made obvious errors or has forgotten to give facts that are essential to the order, may cause offense. All such matters must be handled with courtesy and sometimes with delicacy. The writer may well begin a letter seeking further information by showing that his motive is to give the customer ultimate satisfaction. He should show willingness to do the best thing possible. The following letter does not call attention to the buyer's fault in not giving enough information; instead, it explains why it is not the seller's fault that the order cannot be filled, and does much to induce the customer to make out his orders with greater care:

Dear Sir:

We would like to make immediate shipment of the wheel-puller described in your letter of May 31, but to insure you satisfaction, we wish to know whether you want one suitable for a wood or a wire wheel.

By referring to the Parts Catalogue, you will find there are two wheel-pullers listed. In order that we can bill this order correctly, please tell us which puller is wanted, and immediate shipment will be made.

Why not use the regular spare parts order form, a copy of which is enclosed? This form has been made up for dealers to use in ordering spare parts, and we shall be very glad to send you a supply if you have none now.

Very truly yours,

*Acknowledgment of Orders From Regular Customers.*

Acknowledgment of orders from regular customers do not put correspondents upon their mettle so much as do those to new customers, but they are none the less important because profits come from repeat orders and because there is no better advertiser than a satisfied customer. He knows whether the orders are filled with promptness as advertised, whether the merchandise is as salable as claimed, and whether the service of the firm has been 100%. If orders come for larger amounts than usual, a special and a personal acknowledgment will please the customer. Special service will serve to bind him to the firm.

*Printed* forms such as the following seem preferable to typewritten letters which pretend to be personal but which are really stereotyped forms.

Your selection of O-G footwear has gone forward to you via parcel post.

Please accept this expression of thanks for your patronage—we sincerely appreciate your favors and hope that we will merit further orders from you.

Your future correspondence will receive personal attention if addressed to the undersigned.

Very truly yours,

O'CONNOR & GOLDBERG

J. D. Watkins

General Manager

The following printed form leaves a space directly beneath the printed matter in which an additional message is typed.

The information given below is in response to your recent communication for which we thank you. It will be of assistance to us if in case of reply, you will return this sheet.

Respectfully,

BLANK & COMPANY

April 17, 1924

5802: Since the swiss ordered is only 31 inches wide, we are filling your order for 7 yards.

*Elements of Efficient Acknowledgments.* The points already made, especially the illustrations given, show that acknowledgments both to new and to old customers may contain the following material:

1. Information as to what action is being taken concerning the shipment of goods ordered.
2. Sales talk to create confidence in the quality of the goods and of the service.
3. Expression of the firm's willingness to back up the merchandise.
4. Expression of appreciation for the order and invitation for future orders.

Acknowledgments are given business-building qualities by:

1. Using language that carries a cordial and personal tone.
2. Giving the information at the beginning that answers the query in the reader's mind as he opens the acknowledgment.
3. Placing routine details in an inconspicuous place in the letter.
4. Making information definite and complete.
5. Impressing the message with a spirit of coöperation.



The besetting defect of acknowledgements is their deadly monotony. If acknowledgments to orders are treated as necessary evils, they are going to be hackneyed. They should go out promptly, but not so soon that the information which they contain is inadequate.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CREDIT

- A. Definition.
- B. Capital, Capacity, and Character.
- C. Functions of Credit, The Credit Department, and The Credit Manager.
- D. The Credit Letter, Its Tone, Qualities, and Method.
- E. The Plan and Arrangement of the Credit Letter.
- F. The Main Types of Credit Letters.
  - 1. *Letters Applying for Credit.*
  - 2. *Letters Acknowledging Application for Credit.*
  - 3. *Letters Giving Credit Information.*
  - 4. *Letters Requesting Credit Information.*
  - 5. *Letters Granting Credit.*
  - 6. *Letters Refusing Credit.*
  - 7. *Special Types of Credit Letters.*
  - 8. *Letters Offering to Open a Credit Account.*
  - 9. *Credit Letters of Retail Firms.*

**Definition.**—From the point of view of business, credit is machinery set up to aid trade, or it is a medium of exchange. From the buyer's point of view, credit is the privilege of making future payments for something he gets in the present. From the seller's point of view, credit is confidence in a buyer's ability and willingness to pay at a time agreed upon. It is a commodity, a value to be sold by a firm, not something to be squandered or given away. Private credit falls into the divisions of personal, mercantile, or banking credit. This chapter is concerned almost exclusively with problems relating to mercantile credit, the principles of which are not unlike those of personal and banking credit.

**Capital, Capacity, and Character.**—The seller grants a buyer credit on the basis of his Capital, Capacity, and Character, known as the three C's of credit. *Capital* includes cash, accounts receivable, merchandise, real estate, machinery, and fixtures. Its value depends in part upon its convertibility and productivity. The value of Capital depends, too, upon the education and the experience of the person who has it, and the way in which he has acquired it. *Capacity* is a product of native and technical ability, intelligence, wisdom, personality, and salesmanship. It manifests itself in good buying, merchandising, accounting, and selling. *Character* has to do with the quality of the moral risk which depends upon honesty, punctuality, frugality, diligence in business, wisdom, and goodness.

**Functions of Credit, The Credit Department, and The Credit Manager.** The function of credit is to facilitate trade and to add to a man's ability to do business. Were all products sold on a cash basis, the volume of business would greatly decrease, partly because of the difficulty in consummating transactions through the use of cash, and partly because one's buying power when goods are bought and sold on a cash basis is usually less than when one is granted credit. Credit, therefore, is as good as wealth, or capital, to the man who has it. With \$5,000 initial capital, he may buy \$10,000 to \$15,000 worth of goods. The benefit of the system consists in keeping the amount of credit in fixed relation to the particular financial condition of the country. The fact that eighty-five to ninety percent of all sales are made on a credit basis is evidence of the place that credit holds in the conduct of business today. Credit has an importance, too, because of the initial position it holds in merchandising. Unless the right credit relations can be established with a customer, it is a waste of time for a salesman to seek orders except on a cash basis. If the right credit relations are not maintained after they have been established, he will secure no further orders.

The work of the credit manager and the credit depart-

ment is a part of sound financial management. To accomplish this purpose, the credit manager is, on the one hand, protecting the firm he represents from financial loss by refusing credit privileges to poor risks; while on the other hand, he is developing certain weak credit customers into better risks. His duties, then, are:

1. To win new customers.
2. To keep customers with whom he has established credit relations
  - a. By judicious extension of credit;
  - b. By educating customers in the science of modern business methods.

In performing these duties, he must outline a constructive credit policy, system, and procedure. He must be informed of market conditions; know how much credit business his firm can afford to do; and how much credit should be allowed to customers in relation to their capital and their knowledge of business. Sound financial management consists in sound credit granting, watchful credit observation, and timely action on the part of the credit man if the quality of the risk deteriorates. His aim is, therefore, always to make the credit department coöperate with the sales department in showing a profit.

The credit department is an extension of the credit manager. Through the letters of his department, a credit manager talks to his customers. On the quality of these letters depends the kind of attention he attracts, the ill-will or good-will he builds, and the kind of selling force he employs in his credit work. Hence, no subject in credit work is worthy of more consideration than the credit letter.

**The Credit Letter, Its Tone, Qualities, and Method.**  
—The psychology and phraseology of credit letters grow out of the attitude of customers toward credit. Customers are, for the most part, exceedingly sensitive about their credit standing, whether they are not established as good credit risks, or whether they may justifiably take pride in

their credit standing. For these reasons and because of the importance of credit to a firm, the tone of credit letters must be frank, personal, friendly, and at the same time dignified and conservative. Whatever part humor may play in sales or collection letters, there is no place for levity or jocoseness in credit letters. Credit correspondents seek to make them correct, human, distinctive, and persuasive. They know that clearness, conciseness, and courtesy are all essential as selling forces. Credit letters must have the pull of sales letters. This pull is perhaps the highest quality that the credit man desires.

The writer of credit letters will guard against any reflections upon the integrity or ability of those who seek credit, and place no emphasis on the negative or unpleasant side of the situation. He will always feature what is to the mutual interest of both firm and customer, and *why* the credit recommended is wise in the particular case. And after the wise course has been decided upon, he will find the most persuasive way to accomplish its adoption.

The following two letters illustrate different ways of refusing similar requests of a customer. Although both letters make a good contact with the customer and present the same decision, the first letter deals with him in an arbitrary and impersonal way; while the second letter takes pains to explain the proposed action in terms which the customer will understand:

Dear Sir:

1. Contact:

We are pleased to learn that your business is growing as shown by the increasing number and size of your orders.

2. Explanation:

The size of your last order, however, for goods amounting to \$500 is out of proportion to your business at the present time. We have always conducted our business on a conser-

vative credit basis; that is, we do not extend credit to new firms when the credit involved is greater than the assets of the firm.

3. Action decided upon: As a matter of policy, we shall have to refuse you credit for the present and conduct our business with you on a cash basis as we have done previously.

4. Paving the way for future business: We wish you continued success, and we hope soon to see you definitely established so that it will be possible for us to do a credit business with you.<sup>1</sup>

Yours truly,

Dear Sir:

1. Contact: We thank you for your order of April 12, for electric light fixtures, amounting to \$500. We have wished for some time to place our line with a good merchant in your city, and judging from reports of the rapid growth of your business, you are the man we want to handle it.

2. Explanation and action decided upon: However, our policy in granting credit has been motivated by the customer's interest as well as ours. Your liabilities relative to your assets are too large to warrant the amount of credit you ask

So long as your progress so far has been satisfactory, would it not be best for you to confine your business to that which you can handle on a cash basis? We suggest that you have us

<sup>1</sup> Letter adapted from the credit letters of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc.



handle your present order in this way. It can be shipped out either C. O. D. or upon receipt of your remittance.

3. Paving the way for future business:

If more convenient, you might reserve the special designs for later shipment as your need for them is less immediate. Then, in the course of a few months, you will be established better than under any other plan you might adopt. Frankly, it is as much to our interests as it is to yours that you establish a sound basis for credit, for we want to serve you more and more as your requirements increase.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

Consideration of the content of the above letters will show that they contain these basic elements:

1. A pleasant aspect of the situation is stressed in order to make a favorable contact with the customer.
2. Explanation of the action to be taken is given, and reasons are stated why the action is wise both for the customer and the house.
3. A statement of the action determined upon is made.
4. Inducement is offered to get the customer to accept the action proposed.
5. The way is paved for future cordial relations with the customer.

**The Plan and Arrangement of the Credit Letter.**—The plan or arrangement of material depends upon the solution of the credit problem. If the request for credit is to be granted, the letter may begin with the statement of the fact, which makes a favorable contact. The explanation or sales

<sup>1</sup>Letter adapted from the credit letters of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc.

talk, designed to impress the reader with the value or importance of credit, or to present educational material on how to acquire good credit standing, is placed second; and the paving of the way to future trade relations is placed last. If credit is refused, the beginning of the letter welcomes the credit request; explanation of the refusal and educational material precede the statement of the decision in the matter; and the preparation for continued business comes last.

**The Main Types of Credit Letters.**—A credit letter problem confronts the head of the credit department or one of his assistants each time he receives a request for credit, or invites a cash customer to become a credit customer. The types of credit letters with which he deals are:

1. Letters applying for credit.
2. Letters acknowledging applications for credit.
3. Letters requesting credit information.
4. Letters giving credit information.
5. Letters granting credit.
6. Letters refusing credit.
7. Special types of credit letters.
8. Letters offering to open a credit account.
9. Credit letters of retail firms.

*Letters Applying for Credit.* The letter applying for credit is usually in the nature of an order and request for an open account or else a request for credit only. The application for credit causes the credit manager to look up the applicant's rating in Dun or Bradstreet, to request credit information from references given by the applicant, or to ask the applicant for a financial statement.

Two letters of application are given for illustrative purposes. The first, because of the judgment shown by the applicant in presenting details, and because of the definiteness, dignity, and serious tone of the letter, inspired confidence in the credit man who received it.

Gentlemen:

Please quote me prices on your assorted car load lot, Assortment Number 3. I am planning to open a retail store in the near future, and I shall be able to use one assorted car load of canned fruit at once.

Shall I expect your regular 30 days net, 10 days less 1%, on the first car?

Since I am just starting in business and am not known to your credit man, will you make inquiry concerning me of The Continental and Commercial Bank, Chicago, Illinois?

Announcement of a date for opening my store waits upon your answer.

Yours very truly,

The second letter inspired less confidence in the credit man who received it, partially because of the lack of credit references and the indefiniteness of "best shops."

Gentlemen:

I am contemplating opening up a millinery store on Broadway near Wilson Avenue and wish to apply to you for credit.

I have had five years' experience in the best shops in the city, and besides have had a good general education, being a graduate of the Senn High School and the Bryant and Stratton Business College. I have saved \$3,000 during my five years of work and have a fairly large acquaintanceship. I intend to practice the strictest economy in the conduct of my business, having in view a store in a very fine locality, the rent of which does not exceed \$75.00 per month.

I wish to open a credit account with you for \$1,000 and will be glad to meet your credit man for a personal interview at any time you suggest.

Yours respectfully,

*Letters Acknowledging Application for Credit.* The procedure of the credit man who receives a request for credit is to look up the credit applicant in a commercial rating

book such as Bradstreet or Dun. In the two cases quoted, the applicants for credit, because they are just starting in business, are not rated. The credit man would probably write the first applicant direct such a letter as number 1 and the second applicant, letter number 2.

### *Letter I*

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your request for credit. We have written the reference whom you have named.

If your needs make it desirable that you get immediate credit accommodations on this one car, you can aid our investigation by sending us a statement showing your financial condition in detail. Although we can secure this information from a commercial agency, it will take some little time to get a report. At present, no one of them carries a report for you on file.

Besides the desirability of getting an immediate report from you, there is the added advantage of a direct report; the more we know about our customers, the more satisfactorily we can serve them.

For your convenience, we enclose one of our regular blank statement forms which may be filled in and returned to us.

May we expect an early reply?

Yours truly,

### *Letter II*

Dear Madam:

Contact is made by thanking customer for order.

It's a pleasure to receive your request for credit since we believe our credit terms and service to have a value for our customers.

Firm's policy  
toward customers  
in credit matters  
is suggested.

Information is  
requested.

Customer is shown  
a self-interest in  
replying at once.

In order to determine the  
amount of credit which will be  
to the best interests of both of  
us, will you furnish us with the  
name of the bank where you do  
business, and three references  
who can speak authoritatively  
of your character and ability.

An immediate reply will  
facilitate the matter of estab-  
lishing credit relations with  
you.

Yours truly,

*Letters Requesting Credit Information.* The sources from which credit managers seek information on credit risks are commercial agencies, banks, attorneys, wholesalers, manufacturers, and jobbers, or local business men whose names have been given as references.

The National Association of Credit Men has approved and adopted the following blanks to facilitate getting credit information. Fig. 7 shows the form used in asking for credit information; and Fig. 8, the form used in giving credit information.

If a request for information is made by letter, such a form as the following is used:

Dear Mr. Blank:

We have received an order from the above which amounts to approximately \$\_\_\_\_ You were mentioned as one of whom we might inquire as to \_\_\_\_\_ financial responsibility. Will you inform us in confidence what you know concerning this name that will aid us in passing upon \_\_\_\_\_ credit? What capital is employed, and what is \_\_\_\_\_ reputation for meeting obligations, etc.

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KINDLY GIVE US BELOW YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_

P. O. \_\_\_\_\_

From whom we have \_\_\_\_\_ order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Indicate whether first order)

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE CONSIDERED STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Yours truly,

|                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY<br>NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CREDIT MEN |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|

To \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

| MANNER OF PAYMENT<br>ANSWER—YES OR NO  |                              |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sold since _____ To _____              |                              |
| Terms _____                            | Discounts                    |
| Largest amount owing recently \$ _____ | Prompt and satisfactory      |
| Total amount now owing, . . \$ _____   | Slow but collectible         |
| Amount past due, . . . . \$ _____      | Slow and unsatisfactory      |
| Other information _____                | Days slow                    |
| _____                                  | Accepts C. O. D.'s promptly  |
| _____                                  | Settles by Trade Acceptances |
| _____                                  | Account secured              |
| _____                                  | Notes paid at maturity       |
| _____                                  | Makes unjust claims          |
| _____                                  | Collected by attorney        |

RETURN THIS TO US

FIG. 7.



Chicago, Ill., .....192

WE GIVE YOU BELOW OUR EXPERIENCE WITH

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_

P. O. \_\_\_\_\_

From whom we have \_\_\_\_\_ order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Indicate whether first order)

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE CONSIDERED STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Yours truly,

|                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY<br>NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CREDIT MEN |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|

To \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

| Sold since _____ To _____              |  | MANNER OF PAYMENT<br>ANSWER—YES OR NO |
|----------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Terms _____                            |  | Discounts _____                       |
| Largest amount owing recently \$ _____ |  | Prompt and satisfactory _____         |
| Total amount now owing, . . . \$ _____ |  | Slow but collectible _____            |
| Amount past due, . . . . \$ _____      |  | Slow and unsatisfactory _____         |
| Other information _____                |  | Days slow _____                       |
| _____                                  |  | Accepts C. O. D.'s promptly _____     |
| _____                                  |  | Settles by Trade Acceptances _____    |
| _____                                  |  | Account secured _____                 |
| _____                                  |  | Notes paid at maturity _____          |
| _____                                  |  | Makes unjust claims _____             |
| _____                                  |  | Collected by attorney _____           |

RETAIN THIS FOR YOUR FILES

GIVE YOUR EXPERIENCE ON ATTACHED SLIP

FIG. 8.

The information you give us is for our use only, and as stated will be treated as confidential.

A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. We shall be very pleased to reciprocate this favor when we have an opportunity.

Yours very truly,

*Letters Giving Credit Information.* The character of the reply to a request for information will depend upon its source. That from commercial agencies is furnished upon a form prepared for the purpose. That from an individual or a bank may be given in the form of a letter. The following letter giving information is from one of Chicago's leading banks:

Dear Sir:

The J. H. Company of Detroit, Michigan, referred to in your letter of the 28th, operates a leading department store in that city. The company has permanent quarters, is well managed, and successful, and we have in the past always looked upon their paper as a desirable investment.

We have not had the name before us for the past two years, but such advices as we have received have always assured us of the company's high credit standing in both bank and trade circles.

The concern makes a good statement, and we know of no reason why we should not make an investment in their paper at this time, subject, of course, to the usual option privilege for revision purposes.

Yours very truly,

A wholesale firm giving satisfactory credit information on a retail merchant would make such a statement as the following:

We are glad to give you a favorable report of our experiences with the Blank Company of Decatur, Missouri.

They have a credit limit with us of \$500 a month. Their account has been active for two years and during this time they have discounted their bills regularly.

Yours very truly,

Although banks and mercantile establishments furnish reliable information, it is customary and necessary for them to protect themselves legally when giving such information. They print such a statement as this on their letter heads.

"All persons are informed that any statement on the part of this bank or any of its officers, as to the responsibility or standing of any person, firm, or corporation, or as to the value of any property or securities, is a mere matter of opinion, and given as such, and solely as a matter of courtesy, and for which no responsibility, in any way, is to attach to this bank or any of its officers."

The manner of giving unfavorable information on a credit risk is made clear in the quotation from a letter on this subject by the secretary of a nationally-known wholesale concern:

May 20th, 1925

Dear Sir:

I may say that only in rare cases is a full letter written of the type referred to. Usually an inquiry is sent out and the party answering the inquiry generally writes at the bottom of the page his answer, something like the following expressions, which is generally brief and more or less in the nature of an opinion:

"Would not consider good for amount stated."

"Our experience unsatisfactory."

"We have not had sufficient experience to enable us to express an opinion."

Some opinions such as the above are frequently accompanied with a statement as to the amount that the applicant owes at the time of the inquiry, together with an indication as to what his paying record is—that is to say—whether he has paid promptly or not, indicating how much delay there has generally been in the payment of bills, such as 30 days slow, 90 days slow, or whatever the case may be.

Yours very truly,

*Letters Granting Credit.* If the information concerning a customer is such as gives the credit manager confidence in the applicant's ability to pay, he writes a letter granting credit, and explaining terms of payment. This includes information as to times when bills are rendered, periods during which bills may be discounted, and for what amounts. The clear statement of terms of payment paves the way for good collections. It makes clear to the recipient of credit that he is making a contract with the creditor.

The letter granting credit in some cases begins the customer's credit education. It may contain an explanation of the seriousness and importance of credit, the credit policy of a store, and the necessity of keeping the credit manager informed at regular periods concerning the financial condition of the firm. It should impress upon the applicant the fact that he and the firm which grants credit are partners, for the profit of both creditor and debtor depend upon the reselling of the goods. The creditor has a right to know correctly and completely the buyer's facilities for reselling. It is to the debtor's interest to prove to the creditor that he has adequate facilities. The letter granting credit must be unmistakably friendly, as is the following letter:

Gentlemen:

The information received through your references and your property statement is altogether satisfactory.

Your order for an assorted car load of canned vegetables, Assortment No. 2, will go forward to-day, December 21, by fast I. C. freight. It is billed to you two per cent ten days; net, thirty days.

You will gain favorable results from our national advertising campaign on our products sold under the trade name "Sunny Farm," and the window cards which we are sending by parcel post will serve to tie up the national campaign with your efforts in Boston.

Since it is our desire to aid you in every way which we possibly can to make "Sunny Farm" products bring you profits, our dealer-service department will give you special help and advice on any problem which you send to them. Our credit department will also give you the benefit of their experience whenever you request it.

Yours very truly,

Although the problem of granting credit by letter seems simple enough, some firms fail to make this letter gain the good-will of customers because of the impersonal way or the grudging way in which they grant the credit.

The following letter is both too vacillating and too stereotyped to command respect or to gain good-will:

Dear Sir:

We are duly in receipt of your two orders which have been approved and which will go forward promptly.

In this connection, we might add that your previous account with us was not entirely satisfactory; but we do know that there should be no occasion for your not meeting this account at maturity. It appears that you have ample capital, and believing that it has been more neglect to pay than inability on your part, we are, as we said, approving these orders, and hope this letter will put matters on a little firmer basis with us.

To reestablish your account on a mutually profitable basis, we suggest that you watch your account a little

closer in the future, and not let our drafts on you be returned, in case we should find it necessary to draw. We hope, however, that you will find it convenient to discount your bills as you now anticipate.

We are writing frankly, as we are your friends and want to be regarded as such, and we certainly don't want anybody else to get your business if we can help it.

Yours very truly,

*Letters Refusing Credit.* The problem of how to make the refusal of credit promote business is the hardest letter problem which the credit man has to face. It is not according to human nature to accept gracefully a refusal of a request, especially when it goes counter to what seems to be to one's best interest. The refusal of credit has, therefore, to be frank and fair in order to create confidence through its reasonableness, sincerity, and wisdom. Stress has to be put upon what is of value to the firm, and explanation made which shows clearly that the decision taken is just one step in the procedure to make the customer a good credit risk:

Dear Sir:

We have studied the data regarding your financial condition and unless there is some mistake in the information furnished us it would appear that your capital is not large enough to justify us in letting your order go forward on our regular terms.

Your reputation is well vouched for and on the score of your good intentions we are quite satisfied, but it is positively necessary in such instances that your assets be such as would assure us that you could take care of maturing accounts; it is not so much a question of whether a dealer will pay a bill as whether he can pay it.

It is not at all improbable that the data we have are incorrect and therefore we enclose a blank form



which we will ask you to fill in and mail us together with the names of a few houses you have had dealings with.

If agreeable to you, please deduct 2% cash discount and include remittance with your reply, and further delay on your order will be unnecessary—the shipment will then go forward at once.

Yours very truly,

The following credit refusal presents a striking contrast because it does not constantly work to create credit relationship in the future. It does not give the reasons for the refusal in terms that the reader will understand; the only explanation is “We regret, however, our inability to open a charge account with you at the present time.” The letter has not the frank personal interest which creates good-will in spite of an adverse decision. It takes the “we” point of view: “We would like to feel”; “We suggest”—and “so that your credit with us.” It is cold and formal.

Gentlemen:

We wish to thank you for your letter of January 18, and the statement enclosed showing condition of your business affairs. We regret, however, our inability to open an account with you at the present time.

Your liabilities, of course, are unusually heavy in comparison with your assets; yet your sales, in proportion to your stock on hand, should if business keeps pace anywhere near with your past year's business, enable you to discount your bills.

In that connection, we would like to feel that any shipments which we make to you can be easily handled by you on full discount terms; and we suggest that within two or three weeks after we begin shipping Spring goods, you make us a remittance on account, and then follow that from time to time during the season so that your credit with us can be kept at a

reasonable amount, and at the same time enable you to earn the full rate of discount.

We are writing you frankly because we feel that with your heavy indebtedness our terms should be reasonably close with you, but the terms which we have suggested will make it convenient, and we trust will be entirely satisfactory.<sup>1</sup>

Very truly yours,

*Special Types of Credit Letters.* Letter Answering Request for Increased Amount of Credit: The letter answering a customer's request for increased amount of credit before a second credit investigation is made proceeds upon the same assumption as the letter answering the initial request for credit:

1. The applicant is thanked for giving the house an opportunity to serve him.
2. It is assumed that the applicant will be found worthy of further extension of credit; hence a new financial statement is asked to support this assumption.

The following letter is based upon these assumptions.

Dear Sir:

Your recent order for \$6,000 worth of merchandise is pleasing because it suggests that your business has increased since we made a credit assignment of \$4,000 six months ago.

To give you the benefit of this increase in the amount justified by its volume, will you send us a new financial statement?

The enclosed blank is for your convenience.

We are anxious to fill your \$6,000 order and hence only await this information.

Yours truly,

<sup>1</sup>Letter adapted from the credit letters of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc.

**Refusing an Extension of Amount:** A letter refusing an increase of the amount of credit agreed upon is a modification of the letter refusing credit.

**Refusing an Extension of Time:** Refusal of the extension of time requires the utmost tact. The explanation must be made from the customer's point of view and in terms which he will understand. Its aim is to show the customer that the action taken is for the best interests of both creditor and debtor. The following letter is undiplomatic and unfriendly:

Dear Sir:

On your account of \$101.96, \$42.22 is now considerably past due and the \$59.74 was due for discount yesterday. Our terms of sale are precisely the same as contracted. We expect them to be carried out. We should like to accommodate you by giving you to September 1st to pay the account, but as this would indicate to our main office that you are slow in paying accounts, they would come back to us and tell us that we should not make any delivery on open-account terms.

This would cause you difficulty. We are willing, however, to meet you half way; if you will get your money in our hands before August 23, it will be agreeable. However, you will lose 5% cash discount by your failure to pay within the period specified in our invoices.

We hope that everything is progressing nicely and that you will appreciate the frank manner in which we are writing you.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

If extension of time is allowed, it is a real favor and should be capitalized as such. To get the proper reaction from the

<sup>1</sup> Letter adapted from the credit letters of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc.

FORM 200 REV.



The Associated Retail Credit Men  
and Credit Bureau  
APPLICATION FOR CHARGE ACCOUNT

| No. 3                                                                                                                                              |                          | Date                                 |                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr. and Mrs.<br>or Miss                                                                                                                            |                          | Married<br>Single                    |                          |
| Residence                                                                                                                                          |                          | How Long                             |                          |
| Former<br>Address                                                                                                                                  |                          | Res. Tel. No.                        |                          |
| Board or<br>Live at Home                                                                                                                           | Parents                  | Bills To                             |                          |
| Business<br>Connection                                                                                                                             |                          | Occupation                           |                          |
| Business<br>Address                                                                                                                                |                          | Length Service                       |                          |
| Former<br>Connection                                                                                                                               |                          | Bus. Tel. No.                        |                          |
| Bus. Ref.                                                                                                                                          |                          | Salary                               |                          |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Purchase                             |                          |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Deposit                              |                          |
| Pers. Ref.                                                                                                                                         |                          | New Acct.<br>Old Acct.<br>Alt. O. K. |                          |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Acct. No.                            |                          |
| Bank                                                                                                                                               | In Name of               | Checking<br>Savings                  |                          |
| Real Estate<br>Authorized<br>Buyers                                                                                                                | In Name of               | Equity<br>Clear                      |                          |
| Account<br>Opened by                                                                                                                               | Guarantor                |                                      |                          |
| Settlements to be made IN FULL each month following date of purchase. The above statements made for the purpose of opening an account are correct. |                          |                                      |                          |
| Signed                                                                                                                                             |                          |                                      |                          |
| Buying Today                                                                                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Impression                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Send { At Once                                                                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Write Letter                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| When Ready                                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | No. Letter                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Bank                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Trade                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Spec.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Brad.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                                                                                                                                                    |                          | Limit                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |

FIG. 9.

customer, it must be made cheerfully. At the same time, the customer must have it impressed upon him that he is receiving a favor.

Sometimes wholesale houses find retail firms who are over-conservative in their buying, and who confine their purchases to what they can handle on a strictly cash basis long after they have established themselves as good credit risks. It is good business to invite them to open credit accounts and to sell them the value of opening such accounts.

*Letters Offering to Open a Credit Account.*

Dear Sir:

Your order #4126 has been shipped to-day, May 1, by fast freight B & O and should reach you by the week-end. Every effort has been made by our packing department to see that the merchandise reaches you in good condition.

In order to make your transactions with us more convenient, we shall be glad to open an account in the name of your firm and to hear from you as to the amounts which will probably suit your convenience.

Our terms on standard merchandise are one per cent ten days, net thirty days. This suggestion has been made in the belief that we can thereby give you better service than is possible on cash terms.

Yours very truly,

*Credit Letters of Retail Firms.* Letters concerning credit matters between a retail firm and a customer are not as voluminous as those between wholesale and retail firms. Credit arrangements are often made in person. Whether credit is requested by letter or by person, the one making application is usually furnished with such a blank as the following on which to make his application and supply desired information:

If a person writes to a retail firm asking for credit, he can facilitate matters by giving in his first letter the names of reliable firms from whom he has bought on credit or the name of the bank with which he has an account. If the information furnished shows that the applicant will not be a desirable charge customer, he is refused as courteously as possible and invited to become a cash customer.

*A Letter Declining to Grant Credit.*

Dear Madam:

Referring to your recent application for a charge account with us, we regret exceedingly that, after carefully checking up on the references furnished, the nature of the information at our disposal is not such as allows us to grant this concession at the present time.

We thank you for the application and desire that circumstances may permit of a favorable reconsideration of the matter in the near future.

In the meantime, we shall hope to merit a portion, at least, of your patronage. We promise you our very best in point of service and merchandise at all times.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

If an analysis of the information furnished with the application for credit shows the applicant to be worthy of credit, he is sent a letter so advising him, emphasizing terms on which credit is granted, and indicating that being granted credit is a privilege, and that the store values a credit customer. For example:

*Account Opening Letter.*

Dear Madam:

We take pleasure in advising you that your name has been enrolled on our list of charge customers, thus

<sup>1</sup>Letter adapted from the credit letters of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc.



affording you the opportunity of paying for all purchases once a month instead of for each one individually. Your statement will be rendered the first of each month and is payable between the first and the tenth.

We value your account highly as an expression of your confidence and good-will, and should you, at any time, find either our service or our merchandise faulty in any particular, we shall deem it a favor if you will tell us about it frankly, thus permitting us to correct our methods and to adjust matters satisfactorily with you.

Yours very truly,

In writing letters the credit manager of a retail store will have to be guided by the following facts:

1. Personal buyers are less careful about budgeting than buyers for stores, and factories; hence it is necessary to see that they do not overbuy through being allowed too much credit.
2. Dealings with them are more personal, and they are more sensitive than professional buyers.
3. It is more necessary to make them know that paying bills is fulfilling a contractual relation.

## CHAPTER XV

### COLLECTIONS

#### A. Definition of Collections.

#### B. Place of Collections in the Marketing Plan.

1. *The Relation of Credit Work and Collections.*
2. *Importance of Collections.*
3. *When Should the Resale Take Place?*
4. *Why Collecting is Difficult.*
5. *The Need of System in Collection Work.*

#### C. Classification of Debtors.

1. *The Poor Risk.*
2. *The Medium Risk.*
3. *The Good Risk.*

#### D. Collection Systems.

1. *The Methods of Collection.*
2. *The Elements of a Collection System.*
3. *Qualities that Characterize a Collection System.*

#### E. The Collection Letter.

1. *The Elements of a Collection Letter.*
2. *The Qualities of a Good Collection Letter.*
3. *The Tone of the Collection Letter.*
4. *Appeals in the Collection Letter.*

#### F. Stages in Collection Procedure.

1. *Sale and Resale.*
2. *Notification.*
3. *Reminder.*
4. *Offer.*

5. *Inquiry.*
6. *Urgency.*
7. *Demand.*

- G. The Collection Series.
- H. Unusual Collection Letters.
- I. Special Collection Cases.
- J. Installment Collection Letters.
- K. Collection Policy.
- L. Cautions.

**Definition of Collection.**—Collection is the fulfillment of the credit contract. From the point of view of the creditor, collection is getting money for value rendered; from the point of view of the debtor, it is liquidating an obligation which he has willingly assumed. Collection procedure is governed by the principle of resale; that is, it attempts to revive in the buyer the state of mind he had when he made his original purchase. Resale involves selling the service which a particular store renders, the quality of its goods, its credit privileges, or the value to the customer of keeping his credit sound. It emphasizes the identity of interest of debtor and creditor. It collects money and keeps good-will.

**Place of Collections in the Marketing Plan.**—The constructive function of collection is easily apparent if it is considered in relation to the whole merchandising plan. In this relation it is just one step in the sales process which is consummated, not when the order is taken, not when credit is granted, and not when the goods are delivered, but when goods are paid for, and—as some add—when they have given satisfaction. Collections are, however, usually the final step necessary in the merchandising procedure to make profits.

*The Relation of Credit Work and Collections.* Credit work is more than half of collections. It begins and prepares for the work of collections. Collection problems are to be solved in terms of the credit given. The best credit

man is one who can reduce to a minimum the number of customers who do not pay promptly and fully, the one who takes all the reasonable risks and makes them good risks. The best collection man is the one who makes the maximum collections with the minimum loss of trade, who so educates customers in their habits of paying that delinquencies approach zero. The work of credits and collections is so closely related as to be united in many firms in one department.

*Importance of Collections.* The financial condition of a firm is ultimately conditioned by the efficiency of the collection manager. A sound credit and collection policy, wisely enforced, will cut down the number of delinquent debtors, increase the number and quality of credit risks, reduce the expenses of operating business, and indirectly lower prices of products, so that the volume of business is likely to be increased. This in turn gives more capital to the firm to use in buying and enables it to buy on better terms. It results in customers being able to get an increasingly wide range of merchandise of better quality at lower cost than would be possible under a lax collection system. It makes more satisfied customers.

*When Should the Resale Take Place?* The work of resale should begin when credit is granted, so that the customer may at once be educated as to the terms of the credit agreement, and as to the privileges that he is enjoying in being allowed to buy goods on credit. Every point of contact of the credit man with the customer should be utilized to make the customer accurately appreciate the quality of the goods which the house sells, the merit of its service, and the value to the customer of keeping a good credit reputation. Effort toward resale should be earnestly renewed when the customer gives the first suggestion of becoming slow in his payments, and it should never be lost sight of in the collection procedure, not even in the stage in which the creditor is forced to use the most drastic power at his command.

*Why Collecting is Difficult.* Collecting is especially difficult because of the two-fold purpose of obtaining payment and keeping a customer's good-will. Over-zeal in collecting accounts may attain to almost one hundred percent on collections, but at the same time it will get rid of a large percentage of the firm's customers. Laxity, on the other hand, will not only cause the house to suffer a large financial loss and make it unable to take advantage of discounts by paying its accounts on time, but will also restrict the buying power of the firm and prevent its serving the public. The ideal constantly before the collection man is to avoid both dangers and accomplish his work with the double success: getting money and keeping good-will.

*The Need of System in Collection Work.* In any firm where the number of accounts is large, it is necessary, for the sake of efficiency and economy, to systematize collection work. No one individual can be personally acquainted with all the debtors and the reasons for their delinquencies. The cases of delinquency, however, fall into certain recognized classes which allow for standardization of collection work. By making an analysis of the cases in reference to the class of risk and what collection appeal is effective, one can easily arrive at a certain definite procedure made up of typical steps. Such a system provides a means for giving individual attention at the right time.

**Classification of Debtors.**—Customers may be classified as the poor risk, the medium risk, and the good risk. These can be distinguished one from another by their financial ability to pay, by their paying habits, by their attitudes toward statements and collection letters, and by their reactions to collection appeals.

*The Poor Risk.* The poor risk is a customer at the edge of the credit limit. He buys on a small open account, is allowed only a short term for payment, and requires quick action in case he does not pay promptly. Usually people with small salaries paid at frequent intervals make poor risks. They are satisfactory credit customers so long as

firms limit their accounts in strict proportion to their salaries and are vigilant in seeing that their accounts are paid on time, and so long as misfortune does not overcome them.

*The Medium Risk.* The medium risk is the customer to whom the firm can give greater leniency because of his greater financial ability. He comes from a class of salaried people who are paid usually once a month and who, because of greater wisdom and stronger character, have established better paying habits. Such a customer expects leniency when his account, for any reason, is not paid regularly. The firm usually sends him a number of statements before it sends a personal collection letter. All the actions of a firm in dealing with him are motivated by the desire to retain him as a customer, and the flexible adaptation of policy and appeal become especially prominent in the collection process.

*The Good Risk.* The good credit risk is the customer who has a high rating so far as financial ability is concerned. He may or may not be prompt in his paying habits. His credit limit, however, is usually high, for the firm knows that it can collect what is due whenever it considers it advantageous to do so. The firm, however, usually finds it to its advantage to allow now and then long lapses in payments, in order to derive the profit that accrues from having a customer who makes large purchases of merchandise over considerable periods of time. The attitude of the debtor is that the house desires to retain him as a customer even though he is not always prompt in his payments, and hence he expects more freedom than is conceded to the medium risk. The treatment accorded him is, therefore, the mildest.

**Collection Systems.**—A collection system is a regular method used to train customers to take care of their accounts. It gradually but surely increases the pressure on delinquent customers until they pay or until an understanding is reached. The system is roughly of two parts: the first part is designed to deal with routine cases and is executed by rendering bills and statements, and sending form



letters at regular intervals; the second part of the system is designed to take care of special cases. It usually requires that letters be personally dictated as the result of an inquiry from a customer, or of particular information in regard to the customer.

*The Methods of Collection.* The methods of collecting used in business are: by personal calls, by letter, by telephone, by telegraph, and by drafts. While each of these methods has its value under certain circumstances, and its particular disadvantages, the letter is used by far the most widely. The personal call has the advantage of being more effective than the letter, and is often used by wholesale houses in collecting large accounts or by houses that sell on the installment plan. Its disadvantages are that it is expensive, and that many customers, especially the better classes, resent it. The telephone is not widely used in collecting. It is employed, however, by telephone companies and by wholesale houses and jobbers, when bills that have been rendered are not attended to. Its disadvantage is that it makes no record of the collection effort, and customers may resent its use as they do the personal call. The telegraph is highly effective when other methods fail; and, if ingenuity is employed in wording, messages can be made private. The letter has the advantage of being inexpensive, and it is effective if it is an integral part of a regular and persistent system backed by the prestige of the house. Above all, it is generally approved of by debtors.

*The Elements of a Collection System.* The collection manager, in determining collection procedure for his firm, makes a study of its particular needs in reference to the margin of profit, the necessity of liberal or close collections, the personnel of its customers.

The element of time is the first consideration. How long after a bill is due should the first statement be rendered? How long a time should elapse between the statement and a personal letter? How long a period of time should the house allow for the collection procedure to run its course?

The following descriptions of collection procedure are significant for the different classes of risks.

### THREE-LETTER SEQUENCE OF A WHOLESALE FIRM TO A WEAK RISK

- Sale: Request Payment and name a date  
First Letter: (Ten when payment is expected.  
days later)  
Second Letter: (Ten First paragraph refers to previous  
days later) letter and lets customer down easy  
for apparent neglect.  
Sight Draft on the customer's bank account at beginning of  
second month—Assumes that draft will be accepted.

### FIVE-LETTER SEQUENCE OF A WHOLESALE FIRM TO A MEDIUM RISK

- First Letter: (First Elements of letter: Time overdue.  
of month following Amount. Offer to furnish a duplicate  
sale) statement. Assumption: mere over-  
sight.  
Second Letter: (Ten Assumption: Dissatisfaction with  
days later) goods or financial embarrassment of  
the customer.  
Third Letter: (Ten Inquiry: Attitude of letter helpful.  
days later)  
Fourth Letter: (Be- Appeal to pride and sense of fair-  
ginning of second ness: Opportunity given to explain  
month) within a certain time; otherwise, a  
sight draft will be used.  
Fifth Letter: (One Appeal—fear: Ultimatum to pay or  
week later) accept draft by a certain time.

### SEVEN-LETTER SEQUENCE OF A WHOLESALE FIRM TO A GOOD RISK

- First Letter: First month. Statement and request.  
Second Letter: Fifteenth of month follow-up. Reminder.  
Third Letter: Beginning of second month after a bill is  
due.

- Request for payment. Proposal of use of a bank draft.
- Fourth Letter: Middle of second month. Notice given of bank draft.
- Fifth Letter: First of third month if the draft remains unpaid.  
Notice is given of turning the letter over to the Adjustment Bureau of the Association of Credit Men on a definite date in the future.
- Sixth Letter: Middle of third month. Variant of letter four.
- Seventh Letter: Notice that the account has been referred to an adjustment bureau.

In planning a collection system, the number of notices is the first element which a collection manager determines. The series is usually made up of statements, reminders, letters, and formal notifications. The number of collection instruments of each class used and the length of the collection series depend upon the class of risk to which the debtor belongs and the necessity of the house of promptness in collection. It is customary to continue the statements and reminders for a much longer period with the medium risk and the good risk than with the poor risk. While as few as four or five solicitations for payment are used for the latter, eight or nine are not uncommon for the better risk. Again, it is often found that personal letters which secure payment from the good risk will not secure payment from the poor risk.

The time it takes for a collection system to run its course and the interval between the mailing of prices, is the second element.

The amount of consideration to be given to any class of customers is, then, the third element, with which the collection manager deals. Much more consideration is given to the medium risk and the good risk than to a poor risk whose hope of being able to pay depends upon strictness. The

good-will of the other two classes depends much upon leniency. In fact, the treatment of the good risk seems to amount to laxness.

Tone is the fourth element. Invariably letters should be firm and courteous and appeal to the debtor's better nature. This sums up the psychology of collections. Appeals are to fairness and self-interest, which includes pride and fear. The fact that authorities disagree as to the merits of the humorous, the dignified, and the highly serious collection letter, is proof that each has its place in constructive collections. In certain types of business, such as laundries, groceries, and tailor shops, humor seems appropriate. It is highly successful with the happy, hail-fellow-well-met type of business man, but is not appropriate to those who think of business as a profession.

Especially should there be variation in the collection sequences for small towns where there is little turn-over of customers. One highly successful small-town merchant has his credit accounts classified according to the manner in which, and time when, his customers receive their incomes: single charge accounts, weekly accounts, monthly accounts, long term accounts, and extra-confidence accounts. He expects payment from some debtors every week; from some, every month; from some, yearly; and from others, at their own discretion, or upon his request.

*Qualities That Characterize a Collection System.* The qualities that characterize a good collection system are promptness, regularity, frequency, persistency, and adaptability. Promptness in rendering bills gives the house a good reputation because of its business-like methods, and takes advantage of the fact that the impression made upon the customer at the time of buying is still fresh. It inculcates in a customer the habit of meeting his obligations promptly and of feeling a consequent dissatisfaction for his actions when he does not pay. Repetition of bills at short intervals has a cumulative effect. Just when the customer is on the point of lapsing into indifference, a statement arrives to incite him

to action. Persistency in following an account until it is paid or charged off to doubtful or lost accounts wins the respect of the customer. Flexibility is necessary in a system to make it adequate for special cases which arise. Form letters and form paragraphs may be used so long as collection cases are analogous, and bills or statements may be mailed out at intervals determined upon when the system was devised. But the system which does not provide for specially dictated collection letters to customers when irregularities occur, or for adaptation of procedure to different classes, is certain to increase bad debt losses. If the collection system provides for the use of a series of form letters, then there should not be one series but many series.

### The Collection Letter

*The Elements of a Collection Letter.* The elements of a collection letter are determined largely by whether it covers a special circumstance, or whether it is a part of a series; whether it is intended to perform all the functions of resale, or to perform only one step of collection procedure. In general, a collection letter begins with a point of contact, known either as getting in step with the customer or catching up with the customer; then it states the details of the amount due and the length of time the bill has run; it reaches a climax in the appeal for payment; and it closes with the clincher or means of gaining action. Analysis of the following letters show these elements:

Dear Sir:

During the hot weather it is human nature, I suppose, to overlook a few obligations.

Contact:

Probably this accounts for our not having received the monthly payment on your account.

Details of account:

Appeal: I am sending this letter, therefore, as a friendly reminder, and because you are one of the number upon whose coöperation we depend in order to meet our obligations promptly.

Clincher: A check for \$—— will bring the account up to date and we shall very much appreciate your sending it in the enclosed envelope by return mail.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

Dear Sir:

Contact: Vacation time!

Even if you aren't leaving this week or next, you're beginning to think about it, and to plan when and where.

Details of account: Of course, there are a lot of things to be attended to before you can get away. For instance, there are payments for —— and —— .

Clincher: Don't bother to write a letter. Just place your check in the envelope enclosed and send it along in the next mail.<sup>2</sup>

Yours very truly,

*The Qualities of a Good Collection Letter.* Every collection letter, of course, should be characterized by the qualities of accuracy in statement, definiteness as to facts, courtesy, and conciseness. A collection letter, perhaps more than any other letter, must be well planned, for it gains respect on the basis of its logical arrangement and consistency of tone. The personal collector may order his talk in reference to the reactions of a customer, but the writer of a letter has to depend on the logic inherent in all people, to determine its arrangement and gauge its results. The special qualities of

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> Alexander Hamilton Institute. Reprinted by permission.



any one letter of a series are determined, *first*, by what kind of risk is to be addressed, and, *second*, by the position the letter holds in the series.

*The Tone of the Collection Letter.* The tone of each letter is likewise determined by its place in the collection series and by the nature of the accounts for which the series is used. The underlying assumption in the first half of a collection series is that the delinquent will pay; in the second half, that he must pay. The first letters of the series, then, are mild and matter-of-fact in tone; the later letters are intentionally firmer.

The first letter is pitched in the key of a courteous reminder. Then comes a stage at which a more serious tone is needed, for carelessness or financial difficulties may be the reason for non-payment. If the debtor does not respond, the purpose of the next letter often appears to be more to get an explanation of his side of the case than to get payment. The tone is one of perplexity, but also of friendliness and reasonableness. If the writer fails to receive a reply, he takes a more determined tone and makes definite appeals to justice, self-interest, or fear, according to the class of risk to be reached. His tone becomes more insistent and grim. Finally, the writer recognizes that he has to resort to more forcible means. The tone naturally is severe and impersonal, approaching the formality of the law. Throughout the series, however, perfect courtesy is to be observed in order to maintain relations which will encourage future business with the debtor. Capable collection correspondents can combine parental kindness with severity without any weakening of purpose.

*Appeals in Collection Letters.* When a customer's account is past due, he has broken a contract which is a serious matter in view of the fact that the whole structure of business rests upon the sacredness of contracts. The first part of collection effort is built upon the assumption that the debtor regards the contract sacredly. This assumption accounts for a *creditor's* assuming extenuating circumstances

and seeking to find them out. It accounts for a *creditor's* inquiring if there is a possible error in an account or if merchandise has not come up to expectation. The following letter in its fourth paragraph emphasizes the contractual relation:

If someone owed you \$—— and seemingly made no effort to pay it, how would you feel?

But now suppose you, the creditor, had put yourself in the place of the customer, found that perhaps he had been hard pushed for money and that you had decided to wait rather than appeal to the law to collect your money.

Then later suppose you wrote him a friendly letter asking him to treat you as fairly as you had treated him. Wouldn't you feel certain that you could expect a prompt response?

There are laws that regulate business, Mr. ———. But the biggest thing that keeps business relations clean and above-board is the fact that most people believe in the square deal. Business would go to smash if we couldn't depend upon the sacredness of an agreement.

That is all we ask from you, Mr. ———, a square deal. You believe in that just as we do, don't you? Then let us settle this matter as between friends. A check from you by return mail will confirm our belief that you believe in the square deal.<sup>1</sup>

The appeal to the debtor's sense of honor is one of the most effective used in collection letters. It rests upon the fact that the vast majority of business men are honest. If they are shown that their creditors regard the credit contract seriously and that the creditor has fulfilled his part of the contract, they will have a high regard for their creditors and respect their business methods. As a consequence, they can be persuaded to pay their bills.

The appeal to fair play is especially effective when a cus-

<sup>1</sup> The National Cash Register Co. Reprinted by permission.

tomers takes unearned discounts. By showing him that in favoring him an injustice is done to others, one can kindle the spark of fairness in him.

Appeal to self-interest in keeping credit standing good is especially applicable in wholesale collection letters. Not always does a debtor realize that there is exchange between creditors of information about the manner in which he pays his bills, although it is a fact of modern credit-granting which he should know.

A creditor may stress the effect of the default upon himself and upon the other men from whom the customer may desire to purchase. The establishment of credit bureaus in most medium-size towns is making this appeal effective in retail collections.

Although appeals are used in every stage of sales procedure, they are presented with greatest urgency in the next to the last stage. For this reason illustrations of various appeals are given in the discussion of the fourth stage of sales procedure.

**Stages in Collection Procedure.** Whatever the class of risk for which the collection series is desired, collection procedure can be divided roughly into stages according to the point of view the collector takes toward the debtor in each stage. Some authorities divide it into seven, some into six, and some into five. Those who make seven divisions include:

1. Sale and Resale.
2. Notification.
3. Reminder.
4. Offer.
5. Inquiry.
6. Urgency in Appeal.
7. Demand.

*Sale and Resale.* The part that the initial selling and credit-granting have in collections is obvious. Over-selling and exaggerated statements of merits of products result in difficult collections. As was said above, resale in reference

to reminding a customer of services rendered and the value to him of sound credit takes place when the credit contract is made. It also takes place when an order is acknowledged and terms of payment explained or the importance of mailing payments is made apparent. For example, resale appears in the following letter to a customer who will pay for a set of books on the partial-payment plan.

Dear Sir:

We are glad to acknowledge your order for a set of O. Henry. We are sending it today by American Express.

The books you have purchased are by the most interesting short-story writer in the English language. They will be a source of pleasure and inspiration to you, and we congratulate you on your good judgment in placing this order.

The enclosed record card makes clear your terms of purchase, the observance of which will insure satisfaction to both of us.

1. Will you send payments in time for them to reach us on the date upon which they fall due?
2. Will you enter every payment you make on this record card so that you will know at all times exactly how your account stands?
3. Will you advise us promptly as to any change of address?

With appreciation of your order, we are

Yours very truly,

*Notification.* The work of the notification stage, like that of the sale and resale stage, is to help customers form good habits of payment and to prevent carelessness about bills becoming a habit.

The instruments of collection considered to be a part of the notification stage are the invoice sent when orders are

filled, acquainting a customer with the time when payment is due, statements which are sent to advise customers that payments will be due at a certain time, or statements to arrive on the day when payments are due.

The following are illustrations of invoice, statement, and first two formal notifications for a book. All are printed forms with blank spaces left for certain typed material:

### THE BLANK PRESS COMPANY

D 6606

20 Jersey Street

New York City

How Shipped—Parcel Post

Date Shipped—3-14-25

Date—3-16-25

A. R. Blank,  
15 E. State St.,  
Urbana, Illinois.

Your order  
3-12-25

### INVOICE

|                         |      |     |            |
|-------------------------|------|-----|------------|
| 1 Preparation of Report | 2.50 | 20% | 2.00       |
| Postage                 |      |     | .14        |
|                         |      |     | <hr/> 2.14 |

### STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

### THE BLANK PRESS COMPANY

20 Jersey Street • New York City

A. R. Blank,  
15 E. State St.,  
Urbana, Illinois.

Date March 27, 1925.

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| 3/16/25 PREPARATION OF REPORTS | 2.00       |
| POSTAGE                        | .14        |
|                                | <hr/> 2.14 |

D 6606

## FIRST FORMAL NOTIFICATION:

The Blank Press Company wishes to call your attention to your account of (month) amounting to \$———, statement of which was mailed you on ———. Please send your check in settlement of this account by (date).

## SECOND FORMAL NOTIFICATION:

Your attention is again directed to the fact that your account for the month of ——— for \$——— is unpaid. May we have your check for this amount by ——— ?

The following are illustrations of the informal type of notifications:

1. We wish to call your attention to the balance remaining unpaid on your December account, which became due on January 10th.

---

2.

## APRIL ACCOUNTS

## BECAME DUE ON MAY TENTH

and as our records indicate we have not received your remittance of ———, your early attention to this matter will be appreciated.

---

3.

We find  
a balance of \$——— still remaining unpaid on your October account.

Will you let us hear from you at your earliest convenience?

---

4.

Your January Account  
became due February 10th. As we have not received your remittance, we ask that you give this matter your immediate attention.

The person writing the collection letters in the succeeding five stages seems to be carrying on a conversation with a



customer, the purpose of which is to arrive at an understanding with him in regard to payment. He makes various assumptions, and the reply or silence on the part of the debtor indicates whether or not his assumption in each stage is true.

*Reminder.* The creditor first assumes that the failure to pay an account is an oversight on the part of the debtor, and that all that is needed to get action is a courteous reminder. The letter aims to convey the impression that the delinquency is unusual and that payment is expected as soon as the customer has been reminded. The following letter is a typical reminder with a constructive paragraph of sales talk added:

Dear Sir:

You have so many things to attend to just now that our statement of your slightly overdue account has doubtlessly been overlooked. For your convenience, we are attaching a carbon copy and feel certain that this friendly reminder will bring an equally friendly remittance.

Have you seen our new accessory catalogue? Many of our friends and good customers tell us it is the most complete article issued and very valuable in the selling helps it gives them. May we not mail you a copy?<sup>1</sup>

Yours truly,

*Offer.* In the second stage, the creditor assumes that the debtor has some justifiable and perhaps unusual reason for withholding payment—dissatisfaction with goods or service, illness, or absence from home, and that payment will be forthcoming as soon as this difficulty is removed. Although some experts maintain that it is bad psychology to allow this assumption to appear in the letter, it frequently proves advantageous in letters of this stage. Here an offer of co-operation appeals to the sense of obligation to a contract

<sup>1</sup> *The Mailbag*, March 5, 1923, p. 376. Reprinted by permission.

and acts as a persuasive element in inducing the customer to pay. Effectiveness is gained through the repetition of the idea that there must be a just reason for failure to pay. There is no hint of indifference or discourtesy, and emphasis is always put on the desire to live up to one's own side of the contract. The following letter exemplifies this stage:

Dear Sir:

If there is an error in the enclosed charge of \$15.80 against you, will you write us about it frankly? We shall gladly correct any items which may be in error.

The fact that you have not answered our letter of January 16, nor paid the account, suggests this possibility.

If this is not the case, may we not have your check for \$15.80 by the fifteenth of this month?

Yours truly,

*Inquiry.* When letters assuming a just reason or unusual circumstance have brought only silence on the part of the debtor, the creditor thinks that his assumptions were mistaken. He knows, however, that to make collection, he must find out the debtor's point of view in reference to the account and his financial circumstances; consequently he makes the further assumption that there must be a good reason for this silence, and he writes in the hope of getting an explanation. Emphasis is put equally upon getting payment or an explanation, as in the example given:

Dear Sir:

There is a reason, of course.

But just why it is you have not replied to any of our three previous letters, nor sent us your check for the \$9.35, which is now almost thirty days past due, we do not know.

Don't leave us in doubt.

You owe it to yourself and to us to reply by attaching your check to this letter and returning it at once or by giving us an explanation.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

*Urgency.* The creditor next assumes that the customer is not taking the proper responsibility in the matter and that payment depends upon the urgency of his message. Appeal to pride, honor, fairness, self-interest, or fear, which may appear in any stage are presented here with vividness. A second appeal is used in case the first one fails. The appeal to fairness is illustrated in the following:

Dear Sir:

You like to have people be fair to you. When you accommodate a customer by selling him goods on time, you know how good it makes you feel when he shows a spirit of mutual fairness and sends you his check promptly. Makes you glad that you showed him a special favor.

That's just the way we want to feel about you. It is our purpose always to be as lenient with our customers as possible and still observe rules that are necessary in conducting business on a credit basis. Even now the rule requiring prompt payment is being strained in your favor. A spirit of mutual fairness should, therefore, inspire you to reciprocate now by letting us have your check for \$50 by return mail in full settlement of your past due account.

Yours very truly,

The appeal to pride, which is one type of self-interest, is often used in the fourth stage of collection work. The following letter combines both appeal to pride and to fairness:

<sup>1</sup> *The Mailbag*, March 5, 1923, p. 376. Reprinted by permission.

Dear Sir:

Why have you treated us and your account of \$85 as you have? Knowing your spirit of pride in such matters, we cannot understand your neglect.

You know we had confidence in your unquestioned integrity—why then, if anything is wrong, can we not have some word of explanation from you? In the absence of any word, we have felt no uneasiness, but the courtesy and consideration we have shown you deserves consideration at your hands. The very best evidence that you agree with us in this view will be a remittance NOW.

You know how impossible it is to confine the knowledge of delinquent indebtedness if you continue this neglect. You owe it to yourself to allow no further delay, and we are looking forward to your prompt payment.<sup>1</sup>

Yours truly,

Sometimes the creditor assumes that the customer can pay if made to see the seriousness of not paying; hence he uses fear as his weapon. For example:

Dear Sir:

You simply can't get ahead as well if you owe money. This is a business law. Being a law, it applies to everybody, and neither of us can change it.

You certainly want to get ahead—be somebody—own something. There is only one way to do it—pay what you owe and pay it promptly.

Our bill of \$84.00 should be paid at once. The point is clear, and we trust you will apply it.<sup>2</sup>

Yours very truly,

<sup>1</sup> *The Mailbag*, March 5, 1923, p. 377. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 378. Reprinted by permission.

*Demand.* Finally, the creditor assumes that the customer can pay if made to see that he has to pay. He then writes an ultimatum. Even though the creditor has determined to employ a draft, a collection agency, or an attorney, he can often retain the debtor's good-will, by showing him that he has been given every chance, and that he has forced the use of power by his negligence.

Dear Sir:

It is with sincere regret that we notice you have made no attempt to do anything on your account within the 5-day period set in our last letter.

We use the words "sincere regret" because no other words could properly express our feelings. There is nothing in connection with our business that we value so highly as our friendly relations with our customers. We try to be worthy of their friendship always. We can expect nothing less from them.

It is just possible that you have been sick or away from home and so have been unable to reply to our previous letters. On the chance that this may be the case and to avoid, if possible, any steps that would injure your local credit, we shall wait 5 days more before taking any other steps.

At the expiration of that time, however, we shall feel justified in considering that we have done all in our power to settle the matter as between friends. That will leave us nothing to do but turn your account over to our lawyer. You will receive no further notice.

It is our earnest hope that you will make it unnecessary for us to do this, by squaring your account at once.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

**Collection Series.**—The letters just quoted to illustrate the type of letters employed in the various stages of collection procedure suggest in a general way the nature of a col-

<sup>1</sup>The National Cash Register Company. Reprinted by permission.

lection series. They do not, however, conform to a single group of facts, as does a collection series, or have the continuity of a collection series.

These letters differ from each other mainly because of their position in the series. Each letter needs to be more grave and firm than the preceding one, each one leading to a climax for the last letter of the series. The bill or statement shows the amount due and the date when it is due. The notification is made up of the amount due, length of time the account has run, and the request for immediate payment. The first letter reports all these elements and may give a short history of the case. Later letters, even those of a stereotyped and formal series, are more personal than statements, and have appeals for collection adapted to the debtor, and the length of time the account is overdue. Finally, demands and threats exhaust the possibilities of collecting by letter, and more drastic methods are employed.

Enough has already been said to suggest the dangers of an unwise use of a series of form letters. No series can safely be taken over from one business and used in another business without thorough modification; nor will a series adapted to one class of debtor succeed with another class. Furthermore, since no series can be sent twice to the same customer, and since perfect control of time intervals between the statements, notifications, and letters is essential to the efficiency of the whole system, very careful checks and counterchecks must be applied. This requires complicated office machinery, especially if a large number of accounts is to be handled. Only by providing for variations to fit different cases, that is, by a "splitting" or "branching" series, can a creditor depend on form letters. Even then, better results can usually be obtained by specially dictated letters as soon as any response is secured from the debtor.

**Unusual Collection Letters.**—There is one type of collection letter prevalent in collection work which is not a part of a series, but which is continually used by firms depending upon no organized collection plan for collection results.



Sometimes it is used in addition to the regular routing of the collection series to stir old accounts into action, or to collect petty accounts. This is a personalized form of collection letter occupying a strategic position because it grows out of the necessity of each occasion. Such letters are usually original in conception and often humorous in tone, but do not always represent a uniform personality and policy in a firm. While they sometimes seem ludicrous to a person out of sympathy with them, they are usually read appreciatively by one to whom they are adapted; and they are effective.

The following five collection letters have been selected for personality particularly, and in each case compatibility of the personality of creditor and debtor is probably the secret of the letter's effectiveness. Harmony of mood is always a persuasive element in collection letters.

### *Letter I*

Dear Sir:

When no answer is received from a collection letter, it is the usual thing to pretend to believe that the matter was overlooked by the other party.

But I am going to be frank enough to admit that I believe the reason you didn't answer my last letter was because you perhaps didn't have the money right then.

In other words, I am taking it for granted that you feel just as we would feel if the conditions were reversed and that you will be as fair with us as we would be with you. Don't you think it only fair to let us have what is owed us?

Just think it over, Mr. ———, and if you cannot possibly square your account today, let us know when you can.

We certainly will appreciate this courtesy on your part. With cordial good wishes, I am<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

<sup>1</sup>The National Cash Register Co. Reprinted by permission.

*Letter II.*

Dear Mr. ——— :

Just draw up a chair, Mr. ———, and let's have a little talk about your account with us.

You began doing business with us in 1919, four years ago. You have bought something from us each year since, and according to your letters in our files you have always been satisfied with the goods and appreciative of our treatment.

It is true you have sometimes taken considerably more time to pay for the goods than the terms of sale specified, but you have always paid eventually, and this hasn't caused any serious break in our pleasant relations.

We know you intend to take care of the April and May bills of this year, too, but as you haven't, so far as we can see, paid any attention to our requests for a check or information as to when you can take care of these bills, you have departed from your former practice of keeping us informed about these matters. Under the circumstances, we would perhaps be justified in forcing action without more talk.

But some day, Mr. ———, you are going to be in the market for more of our line. Your purchases in the past have been bunched, some years in the spring and some years in the fall; so it is entirely possible you may need more of our goods this year. When that time comes, you are going to wish you had treated us as fairly as we have always tried to treat you; and so we are going to give you a chance to take care of those April and May bills, totalling \$413.60, without causing a break between us, which you might later regret.

We shall look for your answer before the end of the month.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

<sup>1</sup> *Printer's Ink.* Reprinted by permission.

*Letter III.*

Dear Friend:

This is a pretty blunt question. But its answer is one of vital importance to us—

Are you going to settle for Vol. I  
of the Complete Works, or are you  
not? Ten Dollars, you know.

Hope still crimsons all the East, and we await your  
reply by return mail.

Yours very sincerely,

ELBERT HUBBARD.<sup>1</sup>

P. S. Volume II is ready.  
Shall we send it along?

*Letter IV*

Dear Mr. Smith:

Do you believe in the Romance in Business talked  
so much nowadays?

Well, I do, and I believe you do too. Business isn't  
such a cold proposition as some would have us believe.  
The friends made in business are alone worth the  
game.

But there's one time when business gets cold and  
that's when the girl comes in with a list of fellows  
who are "good as gold but slow," just at the time when  
money is needed most.

You, who believe in the Romance in Business, will  
know how I feel, for it isn't money to me, but it's  
expenses for salesmen in Syracuse, Champaign, and  
Louisville; it's the pay of an artist in Chicago, and  
it's the hundred and one things that'll make our service  
so good you'll never want to leave us.

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted by permission.

Do I have to ask you in so many words? Here's a stamped envelope—I'll look for a reply from you by return mail.

Thank you—I knew you would.<sup>1</sup>

Very truly yours,

*Letter V*

Gentlemen:

BOO

HOO!

I'm an "Orphan"—A small unnoticed bill!!

John Smith keeps no elaborate file for me and has no follow-up system to see that I'm paid on time.

If you pay me or not, your rating with Dun's or Bradstreet's is not affected. Your credit is not impaired if you put me aside to "pay later."

But Blank has \$135 coming to him, so pay me and get me off your mind! Due on invoice No. 52626.

Thanks!!

Yours truly,

**Special Collection Cases.**—When customers do not respond to the usual collection efforts, the collection manager has to make a sound diagnosis of the case in order to prescribe an effective collection remedy. If he is dealing with stubbornness in a customer who can pay only when he has to, a telegram such as the following will bring a check in more than half the cases, says an authority on collections. Such a telegram as follows is satisfactory:

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by the permission of the author, L. W. Ramsay, Davenport, Iowa.

Mr. Proprietor:

Am making special trip to (city or town) day after tomorrow to see you. Refer to letter eighteenth.

And the *letter of the eighteenth* is a collection letter. Sometimes, the personal collector *does* make the trip.

If the debtor is honest but has been hard hit by a series of unfortunate circumstances, so that payment is impossible for the time being, some firms, especially those in small towns where turnover in customers is slight, make a practice of charging off the item to "Doubtful Accounts" or "Lost Accounts" and writing the customer an invitation to continue trading on a cash basis. The following letter has been found effective in keeping the cash trade of customers who would otherwise cease to buy from the store where their credit was no longer good:

Dear Sir:

The fact that you have neither paid your account of Dec. 1, 1924, amounting to \$50, nor given us an explanation of why you do not pay, leads us to believe that you have been the victim of temporary misfortune.

We, therefore, have closed your account by transferring it to our list of "Doubtful Accounts." This does not prevent your paying it as soon as you are in better financial condition, and meantime, you can come to the store to trade on a cash basis without having this account mentioned to you. The clerks in our store know nothing about this account. They will show you and your family our new merchandise as readily as they will serve a paid-up customer.

It is our sincere wish that better times may come to you in the future, and we know that you will then recall this old debt and pay it.

We shall attempt to serve you so well on your visits to our store that we shall merit your patronage.

Very truly yours,

**Installment Collection Letters.**—While the principles and practices of installment collection letter-writing are essentially the same as those for collection sequences used in the collecting of wholesale or retail accounts which have become delinquent, they differ from them sufficiently to justify special treatment. The importance of collection letters to the successful consummation of the installment method of selling merchandise, which has grown by leaps and bounds in the last twenty-five years, because it is productive of a large amount of business, also makes the emphasis of special treatment desirable.

The installment collection problem differs from ordinary collection problems in these respects: First, it depends upon conservative sales and advertising policy. A mail-order house, such as Montgomery Ward & Company, adheres to the policy of making conservative descriptions of merchandise. This tends to prevent trouble arising from the application of their slogan, "Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Refunded." Salesmen of reliable houses selling on the installment plan are instructed to explain the contract to the customer at the time it is made and advise him that payment will be expected according to the terms of the contract. If an order for merchandise on this plan is consummated by mail, the letter acknowledging the order makes clear the period during which the article purchased may be returned if, as in the case of books and special publications, it is returnable.

Every letter contact in installment collections is made the occasion of resale. There is resale of goods, or service, credit responsibility, and method from the moment an order is taken until the final receipt is mailed. A correspondence school, for example, which sells its course on the partial payment plan, introduces the resale element into the letter acknowledging initial payment. Its notifications and collection letters are accompanied by printed folders containing examples of value which subscribers have had from the course. Letters in answer to those from subscribers accom-



panying payments contain resale material. If an account is giving trouble, special letters go out from the selling department, which make no reference to the unsatisfactory nature of the account. Lectures and assignments are so prepared as to encourage the subscriber to continue his course. Resale material characterizes the collection letters for regular and special publications sold by the installment method. The subscriber is furnished with guides to reference books or helps.

The writer gives special emphasis to the letters in the reminder stage of collection procedure. He must cultivate the habit of prompt payments. The treatment is courteous but firm. He must make the customer know that the contract means just what it says, not by the severity of collection effort, but by its certainty and its regularity.

The collection manager may rely upon a carefully worked out system of notices on dates when payment is due; of repeating notifications immediately when payments lapse; of following up statements and notifications with letters and sight drafts when customers ignore statements; and of dealing with special cases in special ways when routine procedure does not fit the case.

The tone of installment collection letters is more personal than might be considered in good taste in many kinds of collection letters. The attitude of correspondence schools and firms selling household furniture and equipment on the partial payment plan is personal. The personal element is a part of the policy to retain good-will, to insure future payments, and to serve as the basis of other sales on the installment plan.

For the same reason, it is considered inexpedient to refer to attorneys or collection agencies. These measures are resorted to only when no answer is received or the customer gives warning that he intends to break his contract. The firm selling on the installment-plan contract which allows repossession of goods (which protects it in case it cannot collect) finds this a good talking point in collecting from

a customer who has paid enough down to make it to his self-interest to execute his contract. Installment collectors appeal to fear only when they have decided they do not want to keep the good-will of weak risks and when their product is of such a nature as not to allow resales.

The following statement and two letters of a sequence of seven letters were used to collect for a Hoover Vacuum Cleaner sold on the partial-payment plan. They exemplify the mildness of tone employed to retain good-will, the appeal to self-interests, and the personal attitude toward customers typical of installment collection letters of a house.

*Statement*

(DEALER'S NAME)

6-20-22

Mrs. A. W. Jones,  
1002 Broad Ave. NW.  
Canton, Ohio.

| OLD BALANCE | DATE | REFERENCE | DEBIT | CREDIT | NEW BALANCE |
|-------------|------|-----------|-------|--------|-------------|
|-------------|------|-----------|-------|--------|-------------|

|  |      |         |       |      |         |
|--|------|---------|-------|------|---------|
|  | 5-19 | Invoice | 68.25 |      |         |
|  | 5-18 | Ck.     |       | 6.25 |         |
|  |      |         |       |      | \$62.00 |

June payment of \$6.20 due

The Hoover Suction Sweeper lifts the rug off the floor.

It Beats  
As It Sweeps  
As It Cleans.

Resale of terms of payment in the reminder stage:

Adherence to sales terms is the foundation of good business and credit. We request prompt payment in the same courteous manner that we solicit your trade.

*Letter I*

Dear Madam:

Resale of the  
benefit of prod-  
uct sold:

No doubt like thousands of others,  
you now feel that The Hoover Suction  
Sweeper saves time and money in  
MANY WAYS.

Now that you have used The  
Hoover you, too, wonder how you ever  
got along without it.

Resale of  
terms:

You realize that it saves you many  
times the few small monthly payments  
necessary to make it permanently  
yours.

It is important that these monthly  
payments be made regularly. No  
doubt you have overlooked the fact  
that your second installment—\$6.20  
—has not been paid.

Evidence of de-  
sire to adjust  
terms to the  
customer's con-  
venience:

It is our request that these pay-  
ments be made on the same date of the  
month on which your bill was dated.  
However, if another time in the month  
will be more convenient, we will ad-  
just our records to accord with your  
instructions.

Many Hoover owners find that the  
easiest way to save this monthly pay-  
ment is to set aside only 21¢ a day in a  
"Hoover Fund." By the end of the  
month they are able to make their pay-  
ments without any inconvenience.

We recommend this plan to you.  
Begin now to save your next month's  
installment. But first, bring your ac-  
count up to date by making prompt  
remittance, upon receipt of this letter,  
of the \$6.20 which is now due.

Yours very truly,

*Letter II.*

Dear Madam:

Personal attitude toward customer: It is always a pleasure for us to deliver a Hoover Suction Sweeper. It meets with such a cheerful reception, and we can imagine just how happy it is going to make that housewife, as it saves her time, her labor, and her rugs.

In the same way it pains us deeply when we have to call and take a Hoover away. We can realize how it is going to be missed—how hard it is going to be to have to get the old broom out again, and how soon the rugs will look faded, drab, and worn.

But no servant will work without being paid, and as you have, for some reason, expressed no intention to fulfill the terms of your contract when you purchased your Hoover, we can do nothing but take it back.

However, there may still be some misunderstanding. We have offered our assistance in every possible way. We suggested that you call and see us, believing that in a personal interview the entire matter could be satisfactorily adjusted.

This you have not done, to our great disappointment. Is there anything else we can do? We want to serve you. We want you to own that Hoover and to enjoy its lifetime use. So then, we are going to hold the matter open for a few days.

Please give this your immediate attention. It is urgent, for if we do not hear from you we shall have to instruct our delivery truck to call at your house one week from today and take up The Hoover.

Yours very truly,

The following description indicates the nature and number of notifications and letters, with time intervals, between them, used in a "quick-action series" by a publisher selling books on the partial payment plan:

1. Letter. Title—A Little Reminder.
2. Letter. Title—A Fortnight Gone.
3. The First of Another Month—Three Payments Now Due.
4. Letter from the president, on his individual stationery, of a different color from that of the preceding letters.
5. Letter from collection manager threatening to turn the account over to a collection agency.
6. Letter from agency, in a different color, giving terms on which litigation can be avoided.
7. Second letter from agency, threatening suit.
8. Letter from president of publishing company on his own stationery stating that the agency advises suit but that he is delaying action for another week.
9. Letter from agency giving one more chance to the debtor before suit is brought.

**Collection Policy.**—Good collection policy is always back of effective collection letters. There is no policy, of course, that works 100%. Sound collection principles guide collection managers in specific cases, and beginners in collection work will find it wise to base their actions on a few fundamental principles:

1. The letter leverage in all collections is the customer's credit and the value he places upon it.
2. The aim of the first step in collection procedure is to find out just where the other fellow stands materially and mentally as regards his account.
3. All charge accounts, even uncollectible ones, should be made to bring trade.
4. There should be a flexible collection policy adaptable to individual customers.
5. All essential data, such as the nature of goods, date of orders, shipment, price, etc., should be at hand when letters are dictated.

6. When terms are made, they should be lived up to.
7. Perfunctory performances and nagging create indifference.
8. Extension of time should not be refused if bills will go unpaid anyway.
9. Extensions should be granted cheerfully, for short times and on notes if possible.
10. A statement should be enclosed in every collection letter so that the debtor may hand it to his bookkeeper without embarrassing himself.

**Cautions.**—There are likewise a few collection *Don'ts* which are helpful.

1. Don't insert a humorous letter in a serious collection series.
2. Don't allow a carping, irritated tone in your letters.
3. Don't permit an anti-climax in a collection series.
4. Don't say things obviously untrue, or things that create discord between creditor and debtor.
5. Don't be guilty of contradictory assumptions or variety of tones in the letter.
6. Don't make positive statements when there is any possibility of your being mistaken.
7. Never imply doubt as to a customer's honesty.
8. Never apologize for asking a man to pay.
9. Never show impatience at delay.



## CHAPTER XVI

### CLAIMS

- A. How People React to Errors in Business.
- B. How to Make Claims by Letter.
- C. Qualities of Claim Letters.
- D. Elements of Claim Letters.
- E. Arrangement of Claim Letters.

As long as people are human, there are going to be occasions for claim letters in business transactions. The errors made will depend upon the nature of the business. Shipments will be delayed, misdirected, damaged, wrongly charged, and incompletely and improperly invoiced. Statements will be received when bills have been paid; and merchandise will be delivered after it is no longer needed. The quality of the merchandise will not always be what the advertising or the salesmen have led customers to anticipate. Tires will blow out; fabrics will wear out; and machinery break sooner than expected.

**How People React to Errors in Business.**—To these inconveniences, individuals react differently. Reasonable people know that a certain percentage of error is unavoidable. They consider that small inconveniences are not worth bothering about and that a man who makes each bit of friction in the conduct of business the occasion of a claim letter will spend his energies unwisely and ultimately receive the treatment accorded an habitual grouch. If, however, they decide that an error is sufficiently serious to justify a complaint, they write a claim letter, thus giving the firm who made the error a chance to rectify it.

Less reasonable people are likely to stand on their pride.

They may keep still about things that annoy them and change their accounts to a firm with whom they have experienced no difficulty. When a salesman from the offending firm calls, they greet him with, "Nothing today." If they tell their grievances, they do not tell them to the firm that has erred; and hence they give that firm no chance to substitute satisfaction for dissatisfaction.

A third class of people have a very elastic code of ethics when it comes to making claims against a business house, especially a large corporation. They have imagined dissatisfactions; their claims result from their eccentricities and whims; and they make claims which are not fair.

A fourth class of people become angry, cancel orders, return merchandise, and register their anger in acid, sarcastic, undignified, or incoherent claim letters which make the person receiving them feel sorry "for the poor boob who was so small-minded and so lacking in self-control as to put that silly talk on paper." The following letters illustrate various types of objectionable claim letters:

*Letter I:* An incoherent and altogether objectionable claim letter, which shows that the writer wished to give vent to his anger rather than to stimulate a definite action in his favor:

Dear Sir:

Early in the Spring I wanted some J. J. Fencing, I wrote you. You told me that if I would send in the order with the *money*, and you thought that in 6 or 8 months you could send me the wire. I took it that your letter came from one of those Highly Educated Persons, that the big companies are employing these days. I believe that they are called Experts in "Cheek" and "Bull Dozing" tactics. Happy I can say that *their* days of Automobile Adaptedness are passing. It will take Men, not Cheeky Asses to do business in the future. To be a beggar in an automobile going down the road at 100 Miles per hour, "Clear the track, I am coming," . . . etc.

Yours truly,

*Letter II:* A sarcastic or indirect complaint which lacks dignity:

Gentlemen:

I wish to congratulate you on informing me, after you have advanced the price of Yum-Yums, that my order will be filled at the advanced price. You had this order before you made the advance; and if you do not care to fill it at the price at which I bought it, then keep them.

If you have any further orders for me that have not been shipped for any merchandise that you manufacture, please cancel them.

Yours truly,

*Letter III:* A claim letter which the writer intends to be humorous, but which the recipient regarded as in poor taste:

Gentlemen:

Just a card enclosed, which makes me laugh. You have this card marked, "If the goods are ordered and not satisfactory, return them." This you should change to read, "If after they are ordered, you get the goods, you are in luck as your goods are O.K. once after they arrive." I have no complaint on that score, which shows you handle the right goods, but I spend so much time writing and postage, that I grow tired, but this letter has a return stamped envelope.

Yours truly,

**How To Make Claims By Letter.**—So numerous are the errors in the conduct of business, and so great is the number of objectionable claim letters, that every correspondent needs to know when it is wise to present claims and how to make them effective and pleasing. This discussion is confined to claim letters of buyers since the intrahouse and interhouse claim letters observe practically the same principles.

How not to write claim letters is suggested pretty clearly by the letters quoted above; and cool consideration of the facts of claims and adjustments will result in constructive claim-making. In the first place, the aim of the claim letter is to have an error rectified and not to register righteous indignation or to call someone down. A claim letter is a selling letter, in that it is written to influence someone to act in a definite way and to act willingly. It is written to cancel an order, to have good merchandise substituted for damaged merchandise, and to get a bill decreased. It is, consequently, a problem in persuasion. Perhaps the problem is not so difficult as that of a sales letter, because claims generally go to people whose self-interest is best served by granting them. The writer may rely upon the eagerness of the seller to make an investigation of the causes of the trouble and to make a satisfactory settlement, while the salesman has often to overcome indifference and antagonism.

**Qualities of Claim Letters.**—In fact, so strong is the self-interest of a firm involved in rectifying errors for the sake of future business, that claim letters often need be nothing more than clear, concise, and courteous statements of what has happened. Often they are explanations rather than arguments.

Claim letters should be clear so that the person addressed will know exactly what the writer wants. Yet lack of clearness is one of their chief defects. The first letter quoted above leaves the firm addressed totally in the dark as to what is wrong and what is desired. Their lack of clearness is often due to failure to repeat the details of the original order, exemplified in the following letter:

Dear Sir:

I could not wait any longer for this order without writing to learn if it had been lost. I have not received the tire yet, and it is going on four weeks since I ordered it. I call this rather poor service. Please send the tire at once.

Yours truly,

If the first order was not received or had been lost after it was received, there would be delay in sending a tire even after the claim had been received. Before the person who received it could satisfy the claimant, he would have to send an inquiry as to the size and brand originally ordered.

A claim letter which makes a definite request for the cancellation of an order, return of goods, or exchange of goods, is preferable to one which expresses general dissatisfaction and which puts it up to the firm addressed to suggest a remedy. The following letter gains effectiveness from its definiteness:

Dear Mr. La Mott:

Your charge for the pair of Ladies' Koko Calf, Brogue Oxfords, stock number 2974 has just been received, and we notice that you bill these at \$6.50, while the catalog price, September 15th, was \$6.00.

Realizing that the market on shoes is not advancing, but rather declining, we question this price. If \$6.00 is correct, kindly send us a new charge for this, and we shall destroy the original.

Yours very truly,

A claim, to be effective must demonstrate that one knows exactly what he is talking about. Although explicitness is desirable in claims generally, it is absolutely necessary in claims to express companies, railroads, or trucking companies. Such data must be given as will make it easy for the person receiving it to look up the records of the transaction. This means completeness and accuracy in giving file numbers, invoice numbers, and dates, such as characterize the following letter:

Dear Sir:

We are enclosing papers in our claim No. 462, for damage to shipment of hats, case No. 7864, which was

shipped us August 1st by the Wilberforce Company of New York City.

You will recall that the shipment was inspected on arrival by your representative, Mr. Thompson. His memorandum of damage is attached, stating that one and a half dozen hats were completely ruined by oil which had penetrated the case in shipment.

We attach Mr. Thompson's statement, original invoice, our bill for \$36, original bill of lading, and your expense bill No. 6537 of August 9.

Your prompt attention to this claim will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

BLANK HAT COMPANY

Emphasis is secured in claim letters generally by devoting space to the claim and by increasing the number of details rather than by repeating them. Only when the damage is serious should the claimant attempt to secure effectiveness by threatening to withdraw business if the complaint is not satisfactorily adjusted. The habit that many business men have of threatening in all claim letters to discontinue business is bad because the threat acts like a drug; the more that is administered, the greater is the amount needed to be effective. Threats finally become jokes. On the other hand, effectiveness in claim letters as in sales letters depends upon arousing interest, and piquing curiosity.

Claim letters should be courteous because courtesy is a strongly persuasive element and effective in bringing about the desired action. Moreover, buyers are as much in need of the good-will of those from whom they buy as are sellers in need of the good-will of prospects and customers. A buyer may at any time need credit privileges, information on markets, and timely helps. Anger is particularly unwise because an angry man cannot control himself, and he cer-



tainly cannot command the respect of the man he is trying to influence by his claims. To make a show of anger is unnecessary in view of the self-interest of the seller in adjusting claims satisfactorily. Those who find it difficult to keep biting sarcasm and sharp tone out of claim letters will do well to follow Mark Twain's example. When he felt that a man deserved a calling down, he would write a letter so full of choice vituperation that beside it the usual caustic letter would seem mild. But he would seldom mail this letter. After he had given full vent to his feelings, he would write a second letter, usually a model of concise, courteous, and forceful writing, and mail the second letter.

**Elements of a Claim Letter.** A claim letter usually contains the following elements:

1. Specific exposition of what is wrong.
2. Statement of the inconvenience or trouble resulting.
3. Request for explanations or definite action.
4. An adapted appeal for adjustment and a motive for inducing the person addressed to take immediate action.

The order of claim letters may be logical or psychological. If the logical order is followed, the subject is mentioned first. The point of the letter is then clearer from the start, and whatever details are given have a meaning. The facts in the case follow these in chronological order, and the letter ends with the request for action or suggests the motive for immediate action.

If the order is psychological, its various elements are arranged to control the feelings of the reader. That is, the material is planned to bring about the following steps:

1. Favorable contact.
2. Interest.
3. Conviction.
4. Action.

Each of these steps may be developed as follows:

1. Favorable contact. Something needs to be said to place the writer and the reader on common ground. The

claimant may show his reasonableness by suggesting explanations for a difficulty.

2. Interest. The wisdom of satisfying the claimant is so well recognized that his statement of inconvenience or trouble arouses the interest of the one addressed.

3. Conviction. The effectiveness of the letter depends partially upon showing the reader that the claimant knows what he is talking about. Effectiveness does not rest upon fickle and imagined dissatisfactions, upon claims for the sake of mere convenience, or those arising from whims. The effectiveness depends on the earnestness of manner as well as on the merit of the claim.

4. Action. The inducement which a claimant can make to gain action corresponds to that which a salesman can make in completing a sale. The claimant may appeal to the pride of the seller in maintaining a record for satisfactory service. He may clearly state or suggest a seller's self-interest in making an adjustment; he may promise to place larger orders. He may appeal to fear of loss of trade. Any impulse supplied to secure immediate action acts as a clincher. It may be a request for an answer by a definite time. It may be an explanation of the accumulative effect of damage.

An analysis of the elements of an effective claim letter shows the usual facts around which a claim letter is built.

October 13, 1924.

Dear Sir:

1. Statement of what has happened:

The automatic safety razor blade sharpener #46 C, 11-48 which I ordered on July 26, has not yet been received; nor has an invoice.

2. A motive for acting:

It is today two weeks since I sent my order,

which is an unusually long time, in view of your past prompt service.

- |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. Statement of how the error has affected the person:                             | This leads me to believe that either my letter or your parcel, which is very much needed, has been lost in the mail. |
| 4. Expression of hope that the claim will be promptly investigated and acted upon: | With the belief that I may soon receive the above mentioned article constituting my order, I await your early reply. |

Yours very truly.

The order of the elements in the usual letter varies slightly from the one analyzed above. The statement of the ill effects of the trouble usually precedes the exposition of the motive for adjustment. Moreover, if the inconvenience is a serious one, the motive for acting instead of being an appeal to pride is often a threat of loss of trade.

**Special Points to Watch.**—Diction has to be given special consideration in claims. Such phrases as, "We know you are not trying to be unfair," and "Your fairness is not questioned in the least, Mr. James," are bungling attempts to express confidence in the reader's integrity because they invariably carry a negative suggestion. Undoubtedly the right choice of words depends upon the right attitude in making claims, which must be cultivated by those who would be successful in business. People must assume that a firm intends to give satisfaction and not dissatisfaction. They must know that as long as people are human they will make errors. They must likewise know that most errors can be adjusted. They will write letters showing plainly that they expect the firms addressed to adjust the errors. They will write clearly, concisely, and courteously, and in a tone appropriate to the degree of the seriousness of the inconvenience

or damage complained about. Above all, they will know that claims stated plainly, dispassionately, and positively, command more respect than those stated in angry, sarcastic, or abusive language.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ADJUSTMENTS

- A. Modern Attitude Toward Claims
- B. Definition of Adjustments
- C. Importance of Adjustments
- D. Equipment of Adjustment Correspondents
- E. Analysis of the Adjustment Problem
- F. Principles That Guide the Adjustment Correspondent

- 1. *The Ideal Adjustment*
- 2. *Point of View Toward the Customer*
- 3. *Salesmanship*
- 4. *Tone of the Letter*
- 5. *Promptness*

- G. Elements and Plan of Adjustment Letters
- H. Beginnings of Adjustment Letters
- I. Endings of Adjustment Letters
- J. Types of Adjustment Letters

- 1. *House at Fault*
- 2. *Customer at Fault*
- 3. *Adjustment of Policy*
- 4. *Unjustified Deduction of Cash Discount*
- 5. *Uninvited Adjustment*

**The Modern Attitude Toward Claims.**—The attitude toward claims, in the case of the business man, has undergone a decided change during the last decade. He is beginning to realize that the customer who makes complaints in regard to his merchandise or service is more of a friend than the customer who keeps still and stops buying, or, worse still, who tells everyone about his troubles except the merchant concerned. Those who complain give a firm a chance to substi-

tute satisfaction for dissatisfaction, and their complaints are to be valued since it is a fact that not more than twenty-five per cent of dissatisfied people will make complaints.

**Definition of Adjustments.**—Adjustments are the renewal or restoration of business relations with a customer on a mutually satisfactory basis.

What it involves depends upon the nature of the cause of dissatisfaction; the character, intelligence, and temperament of the person who has made the complaint; and the cost of making the adjustment. It depends, moreover, upon the timeliness in correcting the error. The following letter refunding money on goods returned is an adjustment which gives the customer exactly what was requested:

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is the amount due you for the goods you returned and the charges you paid, plus the 10 cents you sent us.

As you could not use the goods, we are very glad to return your money.

Yours truly,

Refund \$4.20

The adjustment correspondent will not be a business builder unless he considers an adjustment as one step in sales procedure and the adjustment letter a selling letter. A sale is not made when an order is taken; it is made only when the order has been filled, the goods paid for, and the customer satisfied. If the customer is for any reason dissatisfied with the goods which he has received, the adjustment letter is necessary to complete the sale. Nor is an adjustment letter worthy of its name if it merely states a case, makes an explanation, or silences a customer; it must satisfy him. It is an adjustment letter only by virtue of the fact that it has induced the customer to accept a proposed settlement and has built good-will for the firm at the same time.



**Importance of Adjustments.**—The importance of the adjustment letter grows out of the fact that it is an essential part of the merchandising plan. Consequently, if it fails to accomplish its purpose, all the effort of advertising, salesmanship, credit, and collection work is lost. Firms have found that they often expend so much money in getting the first order that the profit comes only from repeat orders. They have found, moreover, that the normal turnover of customers is once every seven years; hence a customer who does not continue relations throughout that period of time is not worth what it is possible for him to be worth to them. Executives realize only too well that they must employ intelligence and repeated effort to gain a customer, but that they may lose him through one unwise decision, or untactful presentation. The importance of adjustments is, then, due to the fact that they keep the customers so satisfied with the service of a company and its products that they will not take their trade elsewhere.

**Equipment of Adjustment Correspondents.**—To accomplish this purpose, the executive who has the responsibility for the adjustments of a firm needs wisdom enough to determine an adjustment policy which is in keeping with the spirit, personality, and quality of the firm, and one which will build business for his house. He, moreover, must be a good salesman of the policy he determines. It is essential to his success that all adjustment correspondents not only know his adjustment policy but also understand human nature. They must be people of equable temperament, or people who can control their tempers, for no class of correspondence in business can be so irritating as claims. They must have a good command of composition and skill in the art of influencing people. They should think of every claim letter as an opportunity to create a better customer by showing a dissatisfied customer to what ends the firm is willing to go in order to satisfy him.

**Analysis of the Adjustment Problem.**—When a claim is received, the dictator, thoroughly familiar with the adjust-

ment policy of the house and imbued with the right spirit toward claims, asks himself:

1. "How shall the claim be classified?"
  - a. "Is the house at fault?"
  - b. "Is an agency (railways, express companies, and government postal service) at fault, on which the house must rely to give satisfaction?"
  - c. "Is the customer at fault?"
  - d. "Does temporary doubt exist, or will permanent doubt exist in the mind of the person at fault?"
  - e. "Is the case of too little importance to the house to be investigated?"
2. "What action should be proposed in order to satisfy the customer?"
3. "What is the best manner in which to acquaint the customer of the proposed action?"
4. "How can the customer's confidence be gained that dealings in the future will be satisfactory?"

The question of who is at fault in a case determines only partially what action a correspondent will propose to satisfy his customer. He is guided, partially, by the amount involved, and more by what specific action it is best to take now, in regard to a particular customer, in order to insure his business in the future. The ideal adjustment, determined as a part of the adjustment policy of his house, directs him.

### Principles That Guide the Adjustment Correspondent

*The Ideal Adjustment.* The ideal adjustment for any firm is maximum satisfaction for the customer at minimum loss to the house. This ideal needs to be stressed, for the young correspondent in his anxiety to make good with his chief is likely to take a short-sighted view of adjustments and to feel that he has done his house the greatest service

when he has considered only minimum loss at the moment. The correspondent who would suggest an alteration of a suit made to order for a customer, to satisfy him with it, would ultimately cause a maximum loss for his firm. Again, the correspondent who fumbles, fumes, or fusses, though he grants a claim, probably gives only minimum satisfaction to a customer.

*Point of View Toward a Customer.* A business-building adjustment policy holds the tenet that those who make complaints are honest. Many even of those who make unjust complaints are not intentionally dishonest. They know that they have experienced trouble with merchandise, machinery, or food products, and they seldom stop to think whether or not they have misused the article in question. They know only that it has not given them the satisfactory service expected. A corollary of the tenet that complainants are honest, is the tenet that they will be satisfied with a fair adjustment, fair to themselves and to the house. This point of view is one which will make correspondents respect a complainant's feelings and treat him courteously.

*Salesmanship.* To make the letter that proposes an adjustment successful, the correspondent must emphasize what his house can do rather than what it cannot do. The action which he proposes has to be sold with the same salesmanship by which merchandise is sold. The pleasant and beneficial aspects of accepting the proposed action have to be presented to the customer. Sometimes books and pamphlets can be used to illustrate correct use of the product in order to secure the best results and help make the adjustment. For, if abuse of a product must be called to the attention of the one who complains, he is more likely to deliberate without prejudice if he is contemplating a typical case illustrated in a pamphlet.

A comparison of the following letters will show the difference in effectiveness when emphasis is placed upon the negative and when it is placed upon the positive aspects of one adjustment problem:

Dear Sir:

A careful examination of your electric vibrator indicates that your difficulty is entirely due to the fact that you have not oiled it properly. When an electric vibrator is run without a lubricant, the ball bearing is injured, as is that in your vibrator. The enclosed leaflet will make clear to you that the troubles you have been having are due to conditions entirely beyond our control. Hence, we are somewhat surprised that you should expect us to replace it for you.

Under the circumstances, we believe that you will agree with us that we should not do more than replace the bearings free of charge and return the vibrator to you express collect.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir:

After examining your electric vibrator, we can easily see that it has been a disappointment to you. In order to help you to get better results with vibrators in the future, we are going to give you a brief explanation of what has caused your trouble.

You will find on page eight, of the enclosed booklet, a vibrator which has been worn in just the same way as yours because it was not oiled. By following the blue pencil instructions, you will see what you can do in order to have no further trouble with your vibrator.

You will readily see from this that the fault was not ours. However, we are desirous that you know of what satisfactory service our vibrators are capable when properly cared for. In order that you may see how satisfactory your vibrator can be if you follow the instructions of the enclosed bulletin, we have installed new bearings free of charge and are returning your vibrator to you express collect.

Yours very sincerely,

*Tone of the Letter.* Tone is highly important in adjustment letters, written as they are to create harmony of mood. What is said has to ring true, and the best way of making it ring true is to write a sincere, straightforward, "you and I" letter. If a claim is granted, the adjustment letter must carry the idea of willingness and cheer in telling the fact. The correspondent who succeeds in making adjustments will guard against suspicion, flippancy, coldness, and impatience in tone. The following letter illustrates a business-building proposal rendered valueless by a disrespectful tone in its presentation.

Dear Mr. Roe:

Don't you think you are a bit hasty in talking about putting your claim for a bundle of laundry in the hands of an attorney? Do you think this is the right thing to do when dealing with a reliable firm like the Blank Laundry?

If you had any trouble last year, I am sure that the claim was settled satisfactorily.

We have a new driver on that route, and he has evidently made the wrong delivery on your bundle, but we are making every effort to locate it. As far as I can learn, you had not called us about this bundle until Saturday evening.

You may be sure that if we do not locate your laundry we shall make satisfactory settlement, and that we still want you to be a Blank Laundry customer and booster.

Yours very truly,

The following letter, based on the same claim, maintains dignity, and calmly and courteously attempts to win again the favor of the customer:

Dear Mr. Roe:

We certainly agree with you that it is annoying to fail to receive one's laundry, especially when this has

happened more than once, as you say; and we are making every effort to locate the lost bundle. In fact, we began investigations as soon as we had your telephone call Saturday afternoon. If we cannot find it shortly, we shall make a settlement satisfactory to you.

To aid us in our effort to make our service increasingly effective, we ask you to tell us whether or not Saturday was your first call in reference to improper handling of your laundry.

The fact that the error, in your particular case, was made by a new driver who is becoming rapidly seasoned, leads us to believe that in the future you will not have troubles with our delivery service.

We value our reputation for reliability and shall not be satisfied until you are pleased with the service you receive from the Blank Laundry.

Yours very truly,

*Promptness.* Promptness in acknowledging a claim is a part of good adjustment policy because it will build good-will for a house. If a man feels that he has suffered an injury, and registers his dissatisfaction in a letter, the longer an answer is delayed, the angrier he becomes. On the other hand, if he receives at once a letter assuring him that his claim is being attended to, even though some delay is necessary for an investigation, he will likely be favorably disposed toward a firm's later efforts toward adjustment. Hence the promptness of the first reply is one factor in restoring amicable relations.

A form such as the following may be used satisfactorily whenever definite information cannot be given at once:

Gentlemen:

We have your letter of \_\_\_\_\_ regarding

---



This is being made the subject of a careful investigation, and we shall endeavor to write to you in detail within a few days.

### Elements and Plan of the Adjustment Letter.

Usually the adjustment letter should consist of the following elements:

|                            |                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contact:                   | Getting on common ground with the customer.                                                    |
| Interest:                  | A statement of the action which the house proposes, in terms of what it means to the customer. |
| Motivation for adjustment: | Explanation of cause of the difficulty, or reason for making an adjustment.                    |
| Reassurance:               | Reassurance as to future satisfaction, or sales talk.                                          |
| Inducement:                | Inducement to accept proposed adjustment at once.                                              |

The following letter illustrates these steps.

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | Dear Sir:                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>Analysis:</i>     | Your letters of January 20 and 24                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Contact:             | have been referred to the writer together with the correspondence covering the loss of a package of prints and negatives made for you on September 27 last.                                         |
| Interest:            |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Offer of Adjustment: | After reviewing these, we certainly feel that you are entitled to the reimbursement requested.                                                                                                      |
|                      | Accordingly, we shall mail to you in a few days our check for \$8.00, an allowance of \$1.00 each for the missing negatives, and we believe this action in the matter will meet with your approval. |

Motivation  
for ad-  
justment:

No doubt, the position taken by our correspondents in connection with this transaction would leave in your mind a peculiar impression of our sense of responsibility. Being in the insurance business, you of course understand that it would be strictly within our legal rights to refuse to reimburse you for time and effort spent in making the exposures, provided the package was lost through no fault of ours. The fact, however, that the parcel was *misdirected* places the moral responsibility on us, and not only are we glad to have an opportunity of making this adjustment of the case, but we appreciate your having called the facts to our attention.

Reassur-  
ance:

We hope that you may have an opportunity of duplicating these negatives; and if so, and you will send them to us for finishing, we shall see to it that the matter is given better attention than was the present transaction.

Clincher:

Please let us hear from you to assure us that this settlement is wholly satisfactory.

Yours very truly,

Whether or not the statement of the decision precedes the explanation depends upon whether the claim is to be granted. If the claim is to be refused, the explanation, if given first, prepares the way for the refusal.

**Beginnings of Adjustment Letters.**—The wording of the beginning of an adjustment letter is conditioned by the class of adjustment it belongs to; there is no rule of thumb that can be unerringly applied in each case. The purpose, however, to be accomplished by the beginning of an adjustment letter is uniform. Always it is to get on common ground with the customer. One cannot hope to appeal to

the reason of a man until he has secured harmony in feeling.

When the house is at fault, so that the claim of the customer is well grounded, the best beginning is one which gives the customer what he requests:

A check for your refund is enclosed.

We are ordering a duplicate shipment of goods.

If the customer is at fault and the claim is to be refused, the dictator can say:

We agree that the experience is troublesome.

We can readily appreciate, after reading your letter of the 5th, that your dress was a disappointment to you.

In this case the wording of the beginning grows out of the fact that the firm welcomes complaints. The letter attempts to sell the adjustment policy of the house, to make the customer know that its motives are fairness to him and to the house. The letter may begin:

Thank you very much for reporting the trouble you are experiencing.

We appreciate the candidness which prompted you to bring this matter to our attention.

If it is uncertain whether the customer or the house is at fault, and delay is necessary to determine whether a claim should be granted, the dictator may get in step with the customer by agreeing with him in something, even if it is nothing more than that he "has a right to be annoyed." The customer is assured that he will ultimately be treated with fairness. He is shown in the meantime by letter that he is receiving attention. He may be requested to furnish certain papers such as invoices or affidavits from express compa-

nies which will make it possible to grant the request made. In such case, the customer's promptness in responding to a specific request should be linked with his self-interest in getting the claim adjusted soon.

The following beginning does nothing to get in step with the customer:

We have your letter of the 18th of June and notice your reason for returning the Royal Club Vellum envelope.

The beginning which does not agree with an angry man usually increases his dissatisfaction and renders the task of ultimately satisfying him doubly difficult.

We were somewhat surprised to receive your communication of March 28th wherein you protest against the spark plugs we furnish with our cars.

We might state that yours is the first complaint we have received in this connection.

If the claim is granted, explanation is unnecessary except in the case of adjustments of policy, or where instruction as to the use of an article has to be given to insure future satisfaction for a customer. When a firm makes an adjustment, not on the basis of right or wrong, but because it is good business, it has to motivate the adjustment to save the complainant's self-respect. Otherwise, he may feel that he is being paid "hush money" or that the firm does not consider it worth while to make any explanation.

**Endings of Adjustment Letters.**—The close of an adjustment letter should leave in the reader's mind the pleasure of satisfactory dealings with a house. If a letter does not leave a good taste in the mouth of the reader, the writer has not capitalized on the adjustment. To make the final impression pleasant, the correspondent may repeat the thought of the beginning of the letter, if it has been constructive:

We appreciate this opportunity you have given us to make things right.

He may make the final effort to get his proposed adjustment accepted:

We believe that this explanation on our part will clear away the misunderstandings that have arisen.

He may stress future satisfactory dealings:

You may be certain that every possible precaution will be taken to prevent a recurrence of the inconvenience.

Particularly should the correspondent guard against what has been called the psychologically bad close, one which really opens the wound healed by the body of the letter:

We want to say again we are sorry we have inconvenienced you.

It is often said that the beginning of the letter is the customer's, the end is the firm's. For this reason the house is justified in using sales talk at the close of the letter, or employing the last sentences to do constructive sales work for the house.

### **Types of Adjustment Letters.**

*House at Fault.* The adjustment letter which considers the house at fault and which grants all that the customer asks presents the least difficulty. Often this letter is nothing but an exposition of the facts. It usually satisfies by merely stating the action to be taken, and reassures the complainant that there will be no occasion for future dissatisfaction. It may express regret that there has been inconvenience, and include an explanation of the steps the firm is taking to improve its system or its service. The main problem in this case is to guard against making the transaction a routine matter and giving the adjustment letter a cold, formal or impersonal tone. For example:

Dear Sir:

We have your letter of June 10, regarding the dozen cartons of white No. 60 thread that did not reach you. We regret their non-arrival and are sending you a duplicate by parcel post.

Yours truly,

The correspondent must likewise guard against granting the claim in a surly manner. For example:

Gentlemen:

We note your remark at the bottom of our letter regarding our charge of Sept. 17 amounting to \$63.50 which you claim to have returned, and we find that this is correct.

Thanking you, we are,

Yours truly,

When a claim is granted, the adjustment letter should have a cordial and positive quality. For example:

Dear Sir:

We shipped your Blank engine by express today. It runs perfectly now, and we feel confident that it will give you the best of service.

We want you to know that we are glad you sent your engine to us when it was not working right. We want our customers to realize that our service to them does not end when we sell them an engine, but that it has just begun. It is a part of our service to see that our engines run well.

In order to prevent the possibility of future engine trouble, we are going to tell you never to touch the timer so long as the engine runs well, and that seldom is it necessary to adjust it. In fact, adjustment should



be resorted to only as a last measure, and then it should be made by a skilled mechanic.

Yours truly,

*Customer at Fault.* When the customer is at fault, the difficulty of writing an adjustment letter is increased. The dictator either grants the claim as a matter of business-building policy, or makes the customer feel satisfied with the refusal. If he decides to grant the claim, there is a business-killing and a business-building way of doing it. He must make such explanation as will save the customer's self-respect in accepting the concession, and such inducement as will lead the customer to try the service or product under proper conditions.

The problem of making a disgruntled person believe in the house, its product, and its service, and accept willingly adverse decisions of the house, as reasonable, is a difficult one. Getting on common grounds with the customer at the beginning of the letter, as indicated in the discussion of the beginnings, is the first step in restoring satisfaction. It usually results from agreeing with him in some respect. Then follow, in logical sequence, the explanations of action to be taken. Finally an attempt is made to induce the customer to continue buying in order to realize that satisfactory service may result from certain products if used under proper circumstances.

The first of the following letters does not retain the goodwill of the customer or make him satisfied with the particular action to be recommended in this case:

Dear Sir:

We believe that the use of the watch for two years without repairs is sufficient service from this grade of watch.

Furthermore, the watch does not show any defects in workmanship or material, but misuse. The balance

spring and jewels have been broken, though with ordinary use these parts do not break, as they are very well protected.

We shall, however, allow for the cleaning of the works, which will lessen the charges \$2. If you will send check for the balance, \$3.50, we shall start immediately on the repairs.

We guarantee your watch will keep accurate time.

Yours very truly,

The dictator might as well have written:

Dear Sir:

You are unreasonable; furthermore, you are either ignorant or dishonest.

The proof of what I say is that you have misused the watch and expect us to make up for its abuse. However, we have condescended to allow for the cleaning of the watch. We shall start work as soon as you pay for the repairs.

We renew our guarantee (which has not meant anything to you in this present transaction).

Yours very truly,

On the other hand, the dictator, without making any greater concession, could have built good-will by such a letter as the following:

Dear Sir:

We fully appreciate the way you feel about the poor service received from the watch movement for which you paid \$18.50 about 8 months ago. It is right that you should expect to receive better service from this grade of watch.

After carefully examining it, we find that the balance spring and jewels are broken. These parts are very carefully protected and under ordinary usage do not break. Evidently the watch has been dropped or has received a hard jar.

However, you may not have been aware of the injury at the time the damage was done. We believe that it is fair to charge you with these two repairs inasmuch as the fault is not due to any defective workmanship or material.

We have planned, however, to bear a part of the expense of putting it in good condition as the watch was purchased from us. There is a charge of \$3.50 for repairs, but the cleaning will be made free of charge.

Since we are holding a credit of \$1, you need to send only \$2.50.

We recommend that you instruct us to start work immediately as it takes ten days for the watch to be timed and regulated properly.

We renew our guarantee on the watch to keep correct time and give you good service.

Yours very truly,

*Adjustment of Policy.* When the customer is at fault and the claim fully or partially granted, the adjustment may be called one of policy because it is made, not on ethical grounds, but on the grounds of good business.

Such adjustments are occasioned by the fact that unsatisfactory service is constantly resulting from using products in a way in which they were never intended to be used. Machinery, fabrics, and cooking utensils are frequently subjected to flagrant misuse.

No better examples of how complaints arising from these causes can be satisfactorily adjusted can probably be cited than are found in the adjustment letter of the Goodyear

Tire and Rubber Company when "policy adjustments" were still made on tires. ("Policy adjustments" were those formerly made on tires which went out of service somewhat prematurely on account of abuses and not on account of any defect in workmanship or material.) The psychology illustrated seems unusually good; consequently, the handling of an abstract case of a "policy adjustment" is given in detail.

Let us suppose, for instance, that a man buys a tire and through ignorance runs it underinflated. He is certain to have poor service, and become dissatisfied. If he makes a complaint about the tire, the company it represents may do one of several things. If it refuses to make an adjustment, the customer will continue being dissatisfied and will criticize the company and the tire. If the firm gives him a new tire without instructing him how to get satisfaction from its use, he will have unsatisfactory experiences with the second, too. Moreover, such a practice invites imposition. A business-building adjustment would induce him to buy a new tire and educate him to use it correctly.

The nature of the adjustment decided, the dictator confronts the problem of how to propose the adjustment. In refusing claims this is of even more importance than in granting claims. If he writes the letter in an arbitrary way, he does not convey to the customer the spirit of fair dealing which is the soul of an adjustment letter and as important as the action itself. The following letter illustrates the arbitrary way of proposing an adjustment:

Dear Sir:

A careful examination of the 34 x 4 No-Hook Tire, to which you refer in your letter of May 10, indicates that it was forced out of service entirely through underinflation.

Proof that  
he is ignorant  
or unreason-  
able:

When a tire is run in this condition, the unnatural distortion of the sidewalls soon leads to a breakdown such as occurred in the case of your tire. Inclosed is a leaflet explaining fully the nature of this condition.

Repetition  
of the state-  
ment that the  
claimant is  
unreasonable:

From this it will be apparent to you that your tire went out of service through conditions entirely beyond our control, and we are somewhat surprised that you should expect us to replace it for you. Under the circumstances, we believe you will agree with us that its replacement with a new tire at a special price of \$22, which you will notice, is \$11 less than the regular price, will be a very liberal and fair adjustment.<sup>1</sup>

Proof that the  
company is very  
liberal and  
fair to an un-  
reasonable  
claimant:

Yours very truly,

The letter ignores the fact that the customer is probably exasperated by having had trouble from what he thinks is a defective tire; the proof that he has been the cause of his own woe does not make him a booster for the tire or the firm. The purpose of the adjustment letter is to make the customer, in his imagination, see how to become a satisfied user so that he will himself take the necessary steps to become a satisfied user.

The desired reaction from the customer can be produced by means of an explanation of how to use the tire properly and a vivid exposition of what satisfactory service it is capable of giving when so used. This, of course, causes the customer to discover for himself that he has misused it. A discount on a new tire is offered as a good-will builder and as a means of clinching the proposed adjustment, *to buy*

<sup>1</sup>The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc. Reprinted by permission.

*a new tire.* Every effort is made to center the attention of the person who has made the complaint not on the trouble he has experienced, but on the satisfaction he will derive from a further trial with a tire under the right conditions. The underlined words in the following letter, a business-building refusal, place the emphasis on the positive, pleasant side of the adjustment. The correspondent does not stress what he *will not* do. He sells what he *can* do. The following letter applies the principles explained above:

Dear Sir:

Getting  
in step:

After examining your 34 x 4 No-Hook Casing mentioned in your letter of May 10, we can appreciate that it was a disappointment to you. In order that you may get better results in the future, we are going to give you a brief explanation of what caused your trouble.

Explanation  
of the trouble  
is to the end  
of obtaining  
future satis-  
faction:

To make this as clear as possible, we enclose a booklet which, you will notice from the illustration, explains a tire which was injured in the same way that yours was. By following out the suggestions given in the part we have marked with red pencil, you will have no further difficulty of this kind, and we are certain that the increased mileage you will obtain will more than please you. In looking at this proposition from your point of view, we can appreciate how you feel, and it is not our idea in bringing these things to your attention to escape whatever responsibility may be ours. However, these are the conditions

Keeping on com-  
mon ground with  
the claimant:

Repetition of  
paragraph two  
for emphasis:



we found, and we thought you would be glad to know about the way to guard against having the same trouble again.

Proposed action to be taken:

Motivation of adjustment which will save customer's self-respect:

We are going to bear a portion of your loss on this tire by sending you a new 34 x 4 No-Hook Casing at \$22. It will be a pleasure to do this for we know that if you will take the new tire and use it as we have suggested, the mileage it will give you will do more than anything else to convince you of the very satisfactory results of which No-Hook Tires are capable.

The new tire is ready to be shipped to you just as soon as you say the word.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

If the customer is not willing to accept this adjustment and writes that he thinks the firm is not living up to its guarantee, the firm finds itself confronted with one of the most difficult adjustment problems. The natural tendency is to take upon one's self the responsibility of proving to the dissatisfied person that he is altogether unreasonable. If the correspondent follows this course, he will turn seeming unreasonableness into obstinate unreasonableness. The wiser course is to emphasize that the firm is not disposed to close the case in any way unsatisfactory to the customer, and to attempt to create the impression that the customer is going to be taken care of with *fairness*. It has been found through repeated experiences that the customer who is asked to say what he considers a fair adjustment, after the firm has had a chance to convince him of its desire to be entirely

<sup>1</sup>The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc. Reprinted by permission.

fair, will ask less than he has previously expected the firm to offer. Such a letter as the following has been found successful:

Dear Sir:

To send you a tire when you are not satisfied would be as unsatisfactory to us as it would be to you. Our purpose is to make such adjustments as will be satisfactory to you, and we can realize after reading your letter of May 10, that we have so far failed to do this.

Through the booklet enclosed in our previous letter, we explained how a tire was injured in the same way that yours was, and how by following out the suggestions given in the part marked with red pencil, you would not only have no further difficulty of the kind illustrated in the booklet, but you would be more than pleased with the mileage obtained.

In asking permission to bear a portion of your loss by offering a  $33\frac{1}{3}\%$  discount, we are not seeking a profit but wishing to offer you an inducement to give our tires a fair chance. If the tire had been faulty in material or workmanship, we would gladly have made an adjustment on the mileage basis. Our interest and that of a customer in obtaining satisfactory service from our tires are identical. Our object is not to evade just responsibility but to help you get satisfactory service from our tires. To make certain that we settle this matter in a way fair to both of us and satisfactory to you, we are going to ask you to tell us frankly what you think the discount should be. We think this method the quickest way of giving you satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

The customer dissatisfied with tires or with other products in analogous cases, usually comes back with a letter accepting the original offer or asking for very little more. In the event that he makes a request entirely unreasonable, the firm

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has prepared the way to show that the attitude toward the unreasonable demand is fair.

For the purpose of comparing the psychology of the type of letter used now in the adjustment department of The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company with those used when "policy adjustments" were made, the following letter is quoted:

Dear Sir:

You surely have had a disappointing experience with this tire.

You will be glad to know, however, that the cut has not damaged the tire seriously, and that a small repair will put it back in good running order.

As you remember, there still is considerable service left in the casing, and as the injury was accidental rather than an evidence of any defect, the most economical thing for you to do is to have it repaired.

We shall be glad to have our repairman do the work, if you wish. His charge will be \$.....; and as the job will be guaranteed to stand up during the life of the tire, you will be taking no chances.

As soon as we receive your instructions, which for your convenience you may note below, we shall have the tire repaired and shipped to you.<sup>1</sup>

Yours truly,

*The Unjustified Deduction.* A man who makes a deduction in paying his bills is knowingly or unknowingly making a complaint. If his contention is correct, the only logical thing to do is to accept his remittance gracefully. The adjustment letter should tell him he is right in the matter and thank him for calling attention to the error.

On the other hand, when his contention is unjust, as it often is through a customer's taking discounts after the dis-

<sup>1</sup>The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Inc. Reprinted by permission.

count period has passed, it is not sufficient to send him bare statements that the deduction is out of order or contrary to the firm's policy. Many customers do not fully understand what a cash discount really represents. If the reason for insisting on a remittance without a discount is made clear to a customer, he almost invariably sends a check for the full amount. The following letters have been used satisfactorily:

Dear Sir:

Our aim is to please, both in our publications and our policies. We have adopted terms that are most reasonable, i.e. 2% ten days, net return, thirty days.

It would be unfair to our customers who pay within ten days to allow you a cash discount ten days late, just as it would be unfair to you to permit them a discount fifty days late when you happen to be twenty days late.

The only way to treat all customers alike is simply to ask our patrons to observe our regular terms.

We are, therefore, returning your check for \$98 and feel sure, now that we have given you this explanation, that we can count on your check for \$100.

Yours very truly,

If a collection manager assumes that the deduction has been taken by mistake, he may write as follows:

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your check for \$4.50. According to our records, however, it falls short 50c of paying your account in full. To help in adjusting matters satisfactorily, will you not check the items on your records?

The first item is a cash discount of 50c which you have deducted. The invoice you are paying was subject to a 10% discount if paid by September 10. As

your check was not received until September 25, you will see why it did not earn the discount.

You will see that the other items check correctly.

If you find this to be correct, will you not send in your check for \$5 in place of this one of \$4.50, which we are returning with this letter?

Yours very truly,

*Uninvited Adjustments.* Progressive firms make frequent analyses of credit accounts to see which are active and which inactive, and invite claims as a means of reopening accounts. They investigate past treatment of claims to find out whether or not these have been handled altogether to the customer's satisfaction. They know that if they decide claims satisfactorily, they have the customer's good-will again and should receive new business. They classify their accounts on the basis of each customers' record and send to each class appropriate letters. The value of these depends upon their timeliness, sincerity, and appropriateness.

The following letter is applicable in some cases:

Dear Sir:

Occasion  
and  
Purpose of  
the Letter:

We have been going over our records for the past few months for the purpose of analyzing our refunds and exchanges made to our customers with the intention of eliminating the causes and improving our service. We find that we refunded or exchanged some merchandise which you bought, amounting to \$2.95.

Statement  
of Policy  
of the Firm:

Our guarantee is based, not only on the slogan "money cheerfully refunded" but also on our absolute desire to furnish the kind of merchandise that we know will give our customers entire satisfaction.

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Request for<br>coöperation<br>of customer:               | If you, therefore, will be kind enough to inform us in the enclosed stamped envelope, whether the above transaction was entirely satisfactory, you will convey a great favor upon us. We can assure you that we shall appreciate any suggestion you care to make to help us to improve further our service. |
| Explanation<br>of appreciation<br>of frank<br>statement: |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Just jot your reply on the back of this letter and enclose it in this envelope.

Yours very truly,

Letters to customers whose accounts have become inactive usually contain these elements:

1. Explanation of what occasioned the letter.
2. Statement of purpose of letter which shows that the interests of firm and customer are coöperative.
3. Proof that the best service can be rendered only through aid of the customer.
4. Request that the customer give frank explanation of what is needed in order to induce him to renew his relation to the house.

Dear Sir:

One firm writes good humoredly:

Gosh! I can't find your name anywhere on the book this month.

No charges have appeared on your account for some time.

We are wondering why. Quality is high as usual; service as efficient as ever. The only thing that doesn't look right is the blankness of your sheet in our ledger. May we serve you again soon?

Yours very truly,



The success of letters that invite complaints with a view to renewing business relations depends upon personalization of the letter. This, in turn, is possible only when the correspondent knows all the facts in the case.

The following letter illustrates such conditions:

Dear Sir:

Our representative, Mr. Graham, has written us that upon his recent visit at your store, he could be of no service to you, and he requested that I find out what treatment you have received at our hands. A search through the files reveals the fact that April 1, Mr. Jones, head of the credit department, wrote you referring to a shipment that had been allowed to become over-due. The letter was effective in one way; it brought back your check. But it also brought a cancellation of an order and cessation of business relations.

Now it may be foolish to open an old sore, but we know it won't heal without being opened. Moreover, I see no good reason why we can't look to the future and establish relations profitable to both of us.

Frankly, Mr. Brown, we want to be of service to you, and our stock of merchandise has never been in so good a condition to aid us.

Mr. Graham is anxious to serve you, and our house is ready to coöperate with him in giving you the kind of service that will make you want to come back again.

Yours truly,

## CHAPTER XVIII

### APPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND INTRODUCTIONS

#### A. Application Letters

1. *What They Are*
2. *Importance*
3. *Procedure*
4. *Plan*
5. *Applications Answering Blind Advertisements*
6. *Applications Resulting From Third Person Information*
7. *Unsolicited Letters of Application*
8. *Qualities of Application Letters*
9. *Appearance of Application Letters*
10. *Why Some Application Letters Fail*
11. *Follow-Up Applications*

#### B. Letters to References

#### C. Letters of Recommendation

#### D. Letters of Introduction

#### Application Letters.

*What They Are.* Application letters are sales letters. The applicant's service, skill, knowledge, or ability is sold in the application letter just as a product is sold in the usual sales letter. The employer is the prospect to whom he wishes to sell his services. His letter is his medium; the length of time specified, his duties, and the salary for which he contracts are his terms of sale. He sells his services in competition with other applicants, and the salary he may

reasonably expect depends to a large extent upon supply and demand.

*Importance.* The importance of the application letter in general grows out of the universal need of young people for getting their first position, the desire of most people for getting a better position, and the necessity which the unemployed have for getting any position.

One man, through ignorance of application letters, lack of judgment as to what to say and what not to say, and inability to judge impressions, may fail to secure the position desired; while another man with no better qualifications may succeed through a knowledge of the technique of applications, the art both of expressing and impressing his personality in a letter. The second man may not be a more worthy candidate, but he knows salesmanship. The belief that the man who makes a better mouse trap than another man, even though the mouse trap is located in a wilderness, will have a beaten path to his door is not so much in favor as formerly. Observation and experience are making it plain that there is no one mouse trap *best* for everybody—that it takes advertising and salesmanship to make people *know* that even a mouse trap of merit *is good*. Worth needs to be represented adequately, especially in application letters.

*Procedure.* The first step, in securing a position by letter, is to determine what one wants in position, opportunity, salary, and environment; whether, in making a decision, one is willing to put one of these things ahead of the others; or how one may balance all four. Next, one needs to take stock of his own education, experience, character, personality, and particular qualities to see how far these are in accord with the requirements of any one branch of business. This inventory should not be made to the end of being arrogant or depressed, but should acquaint a person with what constitutes his strength or weakness. To know what is possible for one gives a self-confidence that commands respect. He is then concerned with finding the position which gives him what he desires and for which his combination of

qualifications fit him. He will seek the employer who will place high value upon his particular type of service. In locating such an opening, he has three methods of procedure:

1. He may wait until he sees a position advertised.
2. He may have a third person (friend, appointment bureau of a college, or employment agency) inform him of a specific position.
3. He may himself canvass the possibilities for positions.

The procedure he elects will determine which one of the main types of application letters he will write: that answering an advertisement; that arising from information of vacancies received through friends or employment bureaus; or the unsolicited letter of application. Each type presents different problems.

The applicant answering an advertisement seldom knows the particulars of a position. He may know the type of position or its general requirements, but he will have little or no knowledge of the specific requirements. Whether the probable opening has been discovered through a third party or by means of his own inquiries, the applicant will find it wise to make a painstaking investigation of the prospective employer's needs, so that he may be able to present an original thought on some phase of the business in question. He may have to spend hours in a library reading technical papers, textbooks, or magazine articles in order to show that he has a speaking acquaintance with a particular business.

He needs also to learn all he can about the character, personality, and temperament of the man to whom he is applying. Is he a dignified, conservative type of man who likes reserve and formality? Is he a man who will like the so-called "pep," "ginger," and "punch" letter, prevalent in advertising and salesmanship? Will the employer place more value upon initiative and natural ability than upon formal education and training? What part will personality have in the appointment? An applicant cannot hope to make his letter a success unless he speaks the same language as the

man to whom it is addressed. To adapt his letter to the reader's point of view, he must have enough knowledge about the reader and enough imagination to see himself through the prospective employer's eyes.

Only when these matters are determined is the applicant ready to ask himself pertinent questions as to the objectives and substance of his letter:

What are the specific needs of the position?

What facts as to training, experience, scholarship, and other qualifications shall I emphasize in order to prove to a superintendent that I am the man who can best supply his needs?

How shall I interpret these facts?

What tone is in good taste in view of my relation to the superintendent?

In what order shall I arrange my material?

How long shall my letter be?

How shall I display it for readability?

What type of stationery shall I use?

What can I keep in reserve for a follow-up?

The elements, however, around which every formal application is built vary little. They are:

1. Indication of nature and purpose of the letter.
2. Analysis of needs of the specific position.
3. Details of applicant's training and experience, chosen for their value in obtaining a definite position.
4. Personal information.
5. References.
6. Request for interview.

The writing of each type of application letter presents an individual problem. The circumstances giving rise to an application, the nature of the position which one is seeking, and the personality of the prospective employer affect the opening sentences, the choice of specific material, and the style of the letter.

*Plan.* The arrangement of the material of the main types of application letters corresponds to the plan of the usual sales letter: contact, interest, conviction, and action. An analysis of the following letter answering advertisement HD 599 in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, makes apparent these steps:

The advertisement letter ran as follows:

HD 599 WANTED. Advertising man and sales correspondent. A competent man desired whose training and experience in advertising, salesmanship, marketing, and finance will make him capable of doing sales promotion work by mail.

H. D. 599

Tribune

Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen:

Contact: Statement that one is applying for a certain position.

Interest: An analysis of the requirements of the position.

Your advertisement in today's Tribune prompts me to apply for a position in the correspondence department.

You indicate that this field of work requires a man with a knowledge of a salesmanship, finance, markets, and direct mail.

These subjects have been included in my three years' training in correspondence work. I have become thoroughly grounded in the principles of general correspondence as well as sales letter



Conviction:  
Exposition of  
training with  
a definite  
position in  
view.

writing and direct mail campaigns. As advertising manager of the campaign of Blue and Co., I am acquainted with the details and methods of publication work including proof-reading, set-up, and advertising solicitation. Also I am active in direct mail sales work for the Commercial Service Company of Chicago, Illinois, especially in commercial sales campaigns and in organizing direct mail fund drives.

Persuasion:  
Personal information.

I am twenty-five years of age and in excellent health.

I wish to work in the advertising department of a progressive firm, so that hard work, reliability, and training will operate for our mutual advantage.

References:

Mr. A. D. Smith, President of the Commercial Service Company of Chicago, Illinois, and Professor H. A. MacFarlane, Head of the Business Organization and Operation departments of Blank University, Chicago, Illinois, permit me to use their names as references.

Action:

I should consider \$200 a month as a suitable remuneration for earnest and successful effort in that field.

Proposition:

Making  
action easy:

I shall be glad for an interview at your convenience.

Yours respectfully,

Sometimes the material of the application is arranged in chronological order as is that of the application letter on

page 354, or the details may be given on a data sheet. Often it is supplied by filling in the blanks on a data sheet which a company has prepared to guide applicants both in the selection and in the arrangement of material about themselves. The following is a blank used by a bond house:

### To Be Filled in by Applicant

#### Application for Position and Personnel Record

Date.....

Name.....

Address.....Phone.....

Age.....Married.....Single.....

Height.....Weight.....

Name and address of nearest relative.....

.....

#### Education

College.....Preparatory School.....

Have you studied law, finance, commerce, economics, salesmanship?

Honors received or special activities engaged in at College. Viz. Editorial Work—Athletics.

#### Church relations

Membership.....Preference.....

College fraternities or other organizations to which you belong.

Now employed.....

Last employed.....

Why terminated.....

Last Four Places Employed

| Name | From | To | Salary |
|------|------|----|--------|
|      |      |    |        |
|      |      |    |        |
|      |      |    |        |

What work would you choose if you were independently wealthy?

Approximately how much money or property have you accumulated through your own efforts?

For references refer to—

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(References must be other than former employers.)

*Applications Answering Blind Advertisements.* The letter quoted above makes clear how an application letter of this type treats the contact and interest steps in sales procedure and states in an informal way the training, experience, salary expected, references, and a request for an interview. If the advertisement gives an analysis of the requirements of a position, it is well to repeat these, as does the letter quoted, in order to get the interest of the prospective employer, and to give a focus to the details concerning experience and training.

In the conviction section of an application letter, only those details of qualifications should be included which are of significance to a prospective employer in showing him that the applicant is the right man for the position. Details

of age, experience, and past success in general are not enough to secure one an important position nowadays; employers want to know qualifications for a particular position. The clincher, in the above letter, since it mentions salary, gives more definite terms on which the employer may decide an interview than are usually given in an application letter. The request for an interview should either include telephone number or street address, or suggest a reasonable period during which the interview can take place. Its object is to make action easy.

*Applications Resulting From Third Person Information.*

Dear Sir:

Mr. P. T. Burroughs has informed me that there will probably be an opening in your Credit Department in the near future, and I should be pleased to have you consider me as an applicant for this position.

I have been employed in positions of responsibility which have brought me in contact with officials of companies in many lines of industry, and I believe that I possess fair ability to analyze character, which would be of value in credit work.

I am 29 years of age, with high school and college training. I received my A.B. Degree in 1914.

During the late war, I held a commission in the Army, and in the summer of 1919, following my discharge from the Army, I held a position as Superintendent of the Redpath Chautauquas.

Upon the completion of the season, I obtained a position with the Blank Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and have been with them since October, 1919. For a time, I held the position of Superintendent of the Tax Department with some forty people under my supervision. In this capacity, I supervised the writing of special reports, handled some correspondence, and supervised the work of the entire department.

While I was located in Milwaukee, I took a course in General Accounting at Marquette University, and a course in Business Correspondence offered by the Company for which I work and conducted by the Credit Manager of one of Milwaukee's largest concerns.

For the past year and a half, my work has been largely on the road, as a Special Tax Representative, analyzing book accounts, meeting and consulting with clients in regard to their tax problems.

My reason for seeking a change is that I am married, and wish to become permanently established, and the nature of the appraisal business is such that this Company can so far offer me nothing except road work.

As I may not be in Milwaukee later than May 15, I should be pleased to have the opportunity of an interview at some time during the next two weeks.

Yours respectfully,

References enclosed.

The securing of favorable contact through the third person (Mr. P. T. Burroughs in the letter quoted) depends upon the relation of that person to the prospective employer or the prestige which he may command. If a name is to be mentioned at all, it should be such as will create a favorable impression.

The means of gaining interest are analogous to those employed in the first letter quoted. Here success depends upon how closely the applicant's analysis of the particular needs of the position agrees with the ideas of the prospective employer. The applicant for the position as credit manager stresses power of analyzing character, writing of reports, letters, and supervising work. If the person who has informed the applicant of the position has not at the same time given him knowledge of the particular requirements, then the applicant has to take pains to discover the requirements and inform himself definitely concerning the vacancy.

A part of his investigation should be the getting of detailed data relative to the character of the man to whom he is to apply. It is well known that speaking the same language is as important in securing a position as are adequate training and pleasing appearance.

*Unsolicited Letters of Application.*

Gentlemen:

Do you believe in letters as a force for building or ruining business? If you do, maybe you have a place for a young man who wishes to help you build more business through your letters.

Do you agree with me that a command of English, knowledge of business practice and human nature, self-confidence, enthusiasm, and originality are fundamental qualities of a good letter-writer? Although I am but twenty-four years of age, I feel that I have acquired these necessary qualities and that I am old enough, aided by a university education, to understand the problems of correspondence work, and yet young enough to learn the work from the ground up.

My business experience has been along lines which have developed qualifications necessary for a correspondent. I have had about six months' experience as a newspaper reporter and have also been employed in a manufacturing concern both at general office and factory work. I have always given my best service to my employers, and as a result have won their interested friendship.

During my university training, I have devoted a large amount of my spare time to the study of selected books and articles in periodicals on letter writing and direct mail advertising. In order to broaden my knowledge, I have become a member of the Direct Mail Advertising Association, attended its annual meetings and have been able to learn a great deal about the problems involved in business writing.



I should like to make connections with a firm immediately upon my graduation from the University of Illinois in June; and if you have an opening in which I can help you, I shall endeavor to the utmost of my ability to be an asset to you.

Will you let me help you build more business through letters?

Yours truly,

Another unsolicited letter of application and one which illustrates the so-called "pep," "ginger," "snappy," "go-getter" type of sales letter was particularly successful for the applicant who was seeking a number of offers of positions from which to choose.

Gentlemen:

You are always in need of sales correspondents. What you want, I presume, is a young energetic man with technical knowledge who can represent your product in a convincing manner; a keen, quick-thinking, "up-an' at 'em" type, for your direct-mail solicitation.

Will you consider my qualifications, please?

I have had three years' training at the University of Illinois in the curriculum of industrial administration offered in the College of Commerce. This curriculum is designed especially for sales promotion and the managerial side of industrial and engineering firms and includes business law, accountancy, and correspondence, besides the fundamentals of electrical engineering, such as mechanics, mathematics, shop and laboratory work.

I have concentrated in correspondence work and have taken special courses in sales-letter writing, including sales campaigns and follow-ups besides individual sales letters. Likewise, I am well grounded in the fundamentals of credits, claims, and collections.

I have been active in direct solicitation for the Commercial Service Company, Champaign, Illinois, spe-

cializing in collection and sales campaigns and organization and institution fund drives. My experience in the engineering field consists of three summers' employment with a consulting engineer with a public utility company and in appraisal work.

I am of American birth and descent, and by education and instinct qualified for the right kind of coöperation. For a beginning, I should consider \$200 a month a favorable salary. Should my qualifications interest you, I should be glad for an interview at your earliest convenience.

Earnestly yours,

The unsolicited letter of application has certain advantages over others. The writer sends it to the firm to whom his personality and character will appeal. He sends it for the position for which he feels qualified. It will probably bring him more than one offer from which to choose. The means of making favorable contact is the same as in the sales letter. Where originality will be appropriate, it may be used in an application letter. Where restraint and dignity are liked in the one, they will be liked in the other. If the contact characterized by initiative and originality creates favorable attention and carries over into interest, the prospective employer will be impressed with the originality and initiative of the man who wrote it. From this point the applicant, as in other types of letters, carries the reader to the thought: "Here is a young man who has the experience, the training, and the initiative which are needed in a progressive business."

So few men make use of the unsolicited letter of application that firms have been known to create positions for those who use it; or they may be given first consideration when a vacancy occurs.

*Qualities of Application Letters.* Application letters must have the fundamental qualities of all effective business letters. Proper adaptation will keep a man from being judged a misfit. Correctness is perhaps more important

to the success of an application letter than to any other kind of letter. When a prospective employer goes through dozens and sometimes hundreds of letters to select an employee, he becomes very critical. Disregard for conventional forms of application, awkward and clumsy phrasing, inaccuracy in abbreviations, misuse of words, carelessness in matters of punctuation, the vulgar trick of omitting the subject of the verb, and abruptness, things which applicants may consider of little importance, are sufficient reasons for crossing the name of an applicant from a list of candidates. Conciseness can be attained by placing the formal details of education, experience, and personal characteristics in a data sheet and making the application letter a means of "playing up" certain features of it. The tone of the letter needs to be frank, sincere, and self-respecting. The forcefulness of the letter depends not upon extravagant and boastful claims of what one can do, but upon judgment in selection of facts, definiteness in presenting details, and the right attitude toward employment in general and toward the present position in particular. Honesty, industry, and willingness to work constitute perhaps fifty percent of one's qualifications; initiative, knowledge, and judgment the other fifty percent.

*Appearance of Application Letters.* Since an application letter is usually going to a person who does not know the applicant, its appearance is all important. In fact, any amount of pains spent in making the letter attractive and absolutely clear and correct will be rewarded.

What has been said in reference to quality of stationery, letterheads, display of parts of a letter in Chapter IV, pages 45-76, is true for application letters. The chief thing to guard against is eccentricity. Since it is always uncertain what a stranger will like, it is a matter of wisdom to follow standard usage. White stationery of regulation business size, with black typewriter ribbon, is usually preferable. One may use either his own personal letterhead or that of the firm or institution he represents.

*Why Some Application Letters Fail.* Many pages could be written about what to avoid in application letters. The following list suggests some of the pitfalls:

1. Poor initial impression.
2. Indefinite reference to the position desired or to the object of the letter.
3. Lack of judgment in selecting what will be significant and interesting to the prospective employer.
4. Material arranged without reference to its significance to the employer.
5. Awkward or trite phrasing.
6. Failure to imagine the impression created by what is said.
7. Negative, complaining, or pathetic tone.
8. Too much egotism.
9. Absence of "you attitude."
10. Incorrectness in names and addresses, in giving data definitely, in references to experience and training.
11. Leaving letter unsigned.

*Follow-Up Applications.* In sales, complaints, collection, advertising, and adjustment letters, it is found that something is gained through the repetition of effort. One battle does not make a campaign; nor does one letter often land a position. The most worth while positions have sometime been secured through a period of persistent effort extending from weeks to months. For this reason, the study of follow-up methods which are used in advertising and selling, particularly, are helpful. Some important suggestions may be kept in reserve to make a basis for a second or a third letter. If the method of stalking a position is that of furnishing the prospective employer with specimens of the kind of work that one can do for him, follow-up letters may be sent at intervals to increase interest and finally be made the means of consummating an application campaign. Firms seeking sales correspondents are likely to propose definite problems in sales letters to the list of applicants in order to see what

quality of work they can submit. The satisfactory solution of these problems becomes, then, the basis of selection. Competition becomes keener as candidates are eliminated, and ultimate success depends upon proving one's claims in the original letter of application.

**Letters to References.**—When an employer considers an applicant seriously, he writes for information from the several people mentioned as references. The purpose of the letter of reference is, of course, to verify what an applicant has said about his qualifications and training and to get further aid in judging his fitness for a position by comparing one man's opinion with another's.

Letters of reference usually contain the following elements:

1. Statement of applicant's name and position sought.
2. Request for specific information.
3. Explanations to enable the person addressed to answer easily and intelligently.
4. Expression of appreciation and of willingness to reciprocate.

Analysis of the following two letters shows the usual arrangement of material in letters of reference.

Dear Sir:

Name of applicant and position sought:  
Request for information:

Mr. Blank is applying to us for a selling position and refers us to you. To assist him in getting properly placed, will you kindly answer the questions on the attached sheet? An addressed envelope is enclosed for your reply.

Explanation which the reader needs to answer easily and intelligently:

This is not a check-up but rather a sincere effort to place a man in a position for which he is fitted. Failure is a serious experience for an individual as well as an expense to the Company. This is why so much thought must be given to putting the right man in the right place.

The work is selling scientifically prepared feeds for live stock and poultry. It requires hard work, willingness to study, and natural sales ability. When an applicant is selected, he is given a thorough training course and helped in every way to succeed. He has large opportunities for advancement and the satisfaction that comes from selling products that render a real economic service to all feeders.

Expression of appreciation:

Bearing the above in mind, please make your answer unusually critical. All information will be treated in strict confidence and will be highly appreciated.

Yours very truly,

Dear Sir:

Position sought:

We are in need of an additional man on our editorial staff—chiefly for highway work. John Smith, now of the Illinois State Bank Department, is highly recommended. I have seen and talked with him.

Name of applicant:

Explanation to enable reader to answer intelligently:

I want a man with large potentiality. He must (1) have good engineering judgment, (2) have a good personality, (3) be of strong character, (4) be able to write good English, and (5) be a man of broad views.

The impression I gained of Mr. Smith is that he has good personality, and the material he has shown me indicates that he can write good English.



Request for  
specific in-  
formation:

Is he a man of strong character?  
Has he the courage of his convictions?  
Can he fight hard when there is good  
cause?

Is his engineering judgment good?

Finally, is he a man of broad views? On this point, I am laying special stress in filling the present vacancy. I want a man whose vision is not restricted by engineering, but whose interests take in economic and social developments. Has Smith such broad interests, or is he by nature the type of man who will readily broaden out?

There is a fine opportunity for a potentially big man. If Smith is not the right man, do you know who is?

Expression of  
appreciation:

Your judgment will be a very large  
factor in our decision.

Sincerely yours,

Both letters minimize the work of the person addressed by making clear the nature of the information desired and why particular information is requested. This point is worthy of stress because a common fault of letters of reference is to leave to the person addressed the responsibility of discovering what the person inquiring wants to know.

**Letters of Recommendation.**—Letters of recommendation are usually answers to letters of reference, giving such facts and opinions as are requested by the prospective employer. They include information about ability and training, about character and personality, or about success in a definite position. How closely the recommendation may correlate with the letter of reference is illustrated by the following answer to the letter just quoted.

Dear Sir:

*Personal.*

Name of  
applicant:  
Position  
sought:

In answer to your letter of January 4, I am glad to give my impressions of Mr. John Smith in reference to a position on your staff.

General quali-  
fications:

He was a very strong student, with an unusual grasp of the essentials of engineering problems, very vigorous, active, and forceful.

Replies to spe-  
cific questions:

I feel sure that he is a man of strong character, and I have seen manifestations that he has the courage of his convictions and will work valiantly for what he thinks is right.

I have not had the opportunity to observe his growth in engineering judgment since graduation; my only information is that he is unusually highly regarded by his associates in the State Blank Department.

Basis of  
judgment:  
Final recom-  
mendation:

Although my information about his general development since graduation is not large, my judgment based on acquaintance with him as a student and on meetings with him since, is that he has the making of a man of broad views and that he may be expected to take up other interests as readily as the strictly technical ones.

Mr. Smith has impressed all of us as a man of high order and ability.

Very truly yours,

Since the purpose of a recommendation is to help an applicant to get a specific position, the person who writes it takes upon himself the responsibility of selecting facts for

their value in showing a man's fitness for a particular position and of presenting them in a way to give them their greatest efficiency in accomplishing this purpose. This means that the tone of the letter will be judicial, that the rightful amount of enthusiasm will be expressed, and that the style will be forceful.

To be effective, a letter of recommendation must be correct in form, logical, and indicative of sound character in the writer; for the prospective employer, as he reads, is saying: "What kind of man is writing this recommendation? Has he had an opportunity to know the facts in the case? Is he free from prejudice? Is his judgment worth while?" The moral responsibility, then, of one who writes a recommendation is often greater than that of the man who writes an application.

For this reason, it is fair for a man to refuse to write a recommendation for a person whom he cannot conscientiously endorse. If he finds himself embarrassed by having his name used as reference without his permission being asked, he may say what he can in favor of the applicant, and leave it to a discerning employer to take note of what is not said. However, some negative criticism of a man, wisely used, adds a judicial tone to a letter, which gains a reader's confidence.

The "to whom it may concern" recommendation has fallen into disfavor because it has been associated with humble positions and used by people low in the wage-earning scale. It cannot compare with the special recommendation which is written upon the request of a prospective employer, giving specific qualifications and details selected to prove a man's fitness for a certain position.

It has the almost fatal disadvantage of giving general statements or facts applicable only to the position which the applicant has just held. The following is typical:

To whom it may concern:

It has been my pleasure to have been acquainted with  
Mr. ——— of ———, ———, for a great many years,

and I can say without fear of contradiction that he is a gentleman of unquestionable character and reputation. The people of his home city speak of him in the highest terms.

It has been my pleasure to have some business dealings with Mr. ——— on numerous occasions. He is always fair and impartial, and his integrity cannot be questioned. I can cheerfully recommend him to any position that he may ask for, having full confidence in his ability to perform whatever he may undertake.

Very truly yours,

The "To whom it may concern" letter, however, is still given by employers to employees severing connections with a firm, because a letter written by an employer while facts are fresh is likely to be better than one written when they are stale. What he says while occupying a particular position in a firm carries more prestige than what he may say when he occupies another position with another firm. Moreover, his address may not be known to the man requiring a recommendation at the time it is needed. Even the "To whom it may concern" letter serves as a certificate of good standing at the time relations of employee and employer are severed.

**Letters of Introduction.**—The business introduction is a modification of the social introduction in which one person introduces a friend to a third person as a matter of courtesy, with the anticipation that the acquaintanceship will be pleasurable. The business introduction carries the implication of equality in business just as the social introduction implies equality in society. It at least implies a moral responsibility for the person about whom it is written.

The business introduction may be written for specific or for general purposes. It is often used to introduce a person who is seeking a position, or a person who is making an investigation of a special nature, such as the transportation facilities of a certain city, or a person who is engaging in a mission such as to sell stock, organize a company, or finance

a project. The business introduction of a general nature is given for a person who is going to a new place where the nature of the help which he will require has not been determined. The person to whom he is introduced will probably be called upon to give him many kinds of information and perhaps introduce him in turn to other people. It is in many cases nothing more than a calling card with the handwritten notation "Introducing Mr. Blank" in the lower left-hand corner.

The contents of the letter of introduction are standardized:

1. Statement that Mr. A introduces Mr. B to Mr. C.
2. The purpose of the introduction.
3. The pertinent information about the one introduced.
4. A request that courtesies be extended.
5. Expression of appreciation of favors that may be granted to the person introduced.

### *Illustration:*

#### Introduction:

I take pleasure in presenting to you Mr. A. C. Shelby, the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of our city, who is visiting Indianapolis to study the work of the Retailers' Credit Association of Indianapolis with a view to organizing such an association here.

I know him to be a highly intelligent, progressive, and conscientious man entirely worthy of your confidence.

Believing that you will be glad to give him assistance in getting the data he requires, I am taking the liberty of giving him this letter.

Yours very truly,

The opening sentence makes clear to the reader the reason for which the letter is written and makes him know how he

is to receive the visitor. The reaction of the reader depends, of course, upon his relation to the writer of the letter and the nature of the courtesy he is asked to grant. The information about the one introduced may be brought in previous to the specific request of the letter if something more is needed than the name of the writer to insure the bearer a favorable reception.

The qualities sought in the letter of introduction are dependent on the purpose of the application and the relation of the writer to the reader. In general they are conciseness, definiteness, simplicity, and sincerity. Although many letters have a formal tone produced by such phrases as, "I take pleasure in presenting . . .," etc., there is no reason why they should not be more individual, spontaneous, and enthusiastic, if the circumstances in the case warrant intimacy. Written introductions need be no more devoid of human qualities than personal introductions, and the tone of the letter, enthusiastic or disinterested, is a factor in its resultfulness. Lowell's letter to Hawthorne introducing Howells, substantiates this point of view:

Cambridge,  
Aug. 5, 1860

My dear Hawthorne:

I have no masonic claim upon you except community of tobacco, and the young man who brings this does not smoke.

But he wants to look at you, which will do you no harm, and him a great deal of good.

His name is Howells, and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several poems in the Atlantic, which of course you have never read, because you don't do such things yourself, and are old enough to know better.

When I think how much you might have profited by the perusal of certain verses of somebody who shall be



nameless—but, no matter! If my judgment is good for anything, this youth has more in him than any of our younger fellows in the way of rhyme.

Of course he can't hope to rival the Consule Planco men. Therefore let him look at you, and charge it

To yours always,

J. R. LOWELL.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted by permission of Harper and Brothers, from Saunders and Creek, *The Literature of Business*, p. 504.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SALES LETTERS

- A. Definition
- B. Importance
- C. Advantages
- D. New Uses
- E. Special Types

1. *To Advertise*
2. *To Prepare a Customer for a Salesman's Call*
3. *To Prepare a Dealer for a Salesman's Call*
4. *To Sell Direct by Mail to a Consumer*
5. *To Sell Direct by Mail to a Dealer*
6. *To Induce a Customer to Come to a Store to Buy*
7. *To Answer Inquiries*

**Definition.**—A sales letter, in the primary sense of the term, is a letter which induces someone to buy something. Originally it was used to make a specific offer on certain goods already known to the prospective purchaser, and it differed little from a bare announcement or quotation of prices. In developing and extending its usefulness in many directions, it has evolved highly specialized forms and established for each form a well recognized technique. The principles governing its construction, being determined by the laws of experimental psychology, are applicable to any letter which aims at influencing the reader's thought, feeling, or action.

Hence, to reiterate what has been said in other chapters, *every* letter, whether it is concerned with inquiries, credits, collections, claims, adjustments, or other departments of business, may be considered a sales letter. This point of view now dominates the entire correspondence of progressive

firms; accordingly, it deserves the emphasis which it has received in the foregoing chapters. In the following chapters a few of the most widely used types of the sales letter are discussed in a way intended to show how the primary sense of the term operates through their diversified forms.

The inducement feature is stressed as a distinguishing quality of the sales letter. A man who merely fills orders for merchandise which advertising has already sold cannot be called a salesman. To deserve the name, he must demonstrate his ability to make people recognize a need or desire for something which they have not wanted before, and make them do whatever is necessary to fulfill a created need or desire.

The importance of this test of a sales letter becomes evident as soon as it is recognized that we cannot count upon a mailing list including only such people as are already logical buyers for a product. If such were the case, a mere announcement of *when* and *where* and *how* certain articles could be purchased would constitute a sales letter. While a very weak letter will gain some orders, if it reaches people who are logical buyers of a product, a very strong letter is needed if other people are to be moved to buy. The sales letter worthy of the name does not merely find buyers; it creates buyers. It does not merely precipitate action; it prepares the steps leading to action.

**Importance.**—On every hand, we have evidence of the important place assigned to sales letters in the conduct of business.<sup>1</sup> If we make a survey of the numerous articles on letters appearing in modern business periodicals, we find that the great majority of them are about sales letters.<sup>1</sup> If we examine the many textbooks on business correspondence now on the market, we find that the majority give very extended discussions to sales letters. If there is an expert

<sup>1</sup>The importance of business letters in general was discussed in Chapter II, p. 21, and the attention which periodicals give to sales letters in Chapter V, p. 77.

letter writer in an organization, he writes the sales letters of his firm. If there are any high salaries being paid to correspondents, they are paid to sales correspondents. If we visit the large offices of any firm, where correspondence is being studied seriously, it is the sales letter which is receiving most study.

Such attention to the sales letter is a natural consequence of the point of view that selling is the most important function in business. In fact, from the objective we have assigned to adjustments, credits, and collections, it is the only function. Adjustments are made to pave the way for future sales; credits are granted to make buying easier for the customer and to bind him more closely to a house so that it may receive a larger portion of his trade. Similarly, all departments of a business are organized for accomplishing the main purpose of selling.

**Advantages.**—The sales letter's importance arises directly from its advantages over other means of selling. In the first place, the cost of selling by mail is usually less than that of personal selling by clerks behind the counter or by traveling men. A good sales letter, unlike a good salesman, can be multiplied by the thousand, and can be present in many places at one time. It can be sent into thinly populated districts where the volume of trade would not pay a traveling man's expenses. It does not have to waste time waiting in the outer office, nor does it have to obtrude itself upon the attention of the prospect. The very fact that a letter can be disposed of at the free-will of the reader often wins for it a hearing which would not be immediately granted to an importuning personal caller. It is the silent salesman.

In the second place, a sales letter may represent the whole organization in a way that is unique. Unlike the ordinary demonstration, it may be the combined result of several experts working together, each contributing something from his special field. Again, it may culminate from the best efforts of one man or group of men over a long

period of time. It can be planned to make a single impression, free from complicating factors.

Furthermore, a sales letter may be precisely adapted to special circumstances. It can be timed to reach a man at the right season of the year, in the right part of the month, on the right day of the week, or even at the right hour of the day.

Its great advantage over advertisements generally is that while the advertisement makes a class appeal, the letter makes a personal appeal. All study of the distinguishing characteristics of a prospect, is to the end of talking to him individually. The main effort in typewritten letters, even in multigraphed letters, is therefore to keep as much as possible of the personal element created by the handwritten letter.

Finally, a letter comes to a man under a seal which it is a legal offense to break. This fact serves to surround its contents with a secrecy which makes him more attentive to them than to the same message broadcasted. In the composition of every sales letter this direct personal individualized approach must be capitalized if the letter is to be effective.

**New Uses.**—"Anything that can be sold can be sold by mail," is a well known slogan. Its truth is being demonstrated every day as commercial organizations find new spheres of usefulness for sales letters. Everyone knows the romance of the mail-order businesses of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, Montgomery Ward and Company, and The Larkin Company; but not everyone knows that firms like B. Altman and Company of New York, John Wanamaker of New York and of Philadelphia, The B. F. Goodrich Company, of Akron, Ohio, Marshall Field and Company, and Chas. A. Stevens of Chicago, Barber Brothers of Los Angeles, and other leading firms all over the country also do a large mail-order business. Though the United States has led in making use of direct mail advertising, other countries are rapidly taking it up. The postman is now likely any

day to leave at one's door a booklet, a trade directory, a sales letter from a publisher in London, a printer in Glasgow, or an engraver in Edinburgh.

Commercial firms in small towns are discovering that there is no longer reason to confine their markets to their own communities. For example, a small company in Peru, Indiana, by advertising its offer of two hundred printed letterheads and one hundred envelopes to match all for one dollar, has built up a coast-to-coast business. The story of the large mail order business of three stores located in small towns, one in Oklahoma, one in North Dakota, and one in Ohio, is further proof of this point.

Farmers are learning to market eggs, canned fruits, dairy products, and meats by mail. Every day's mail brings its unexpected sales letters for articles that someone has thought of selling direct to the user.

**Special Types.**—The principal types of sales letters may be indicated according to the following uses:

*To advertise.* Letters are sent out as ambassadors for booklets, catalogues, and sample books.

*To prepare a customer for a salesman's call and to follow-up his call.* Life insurance companies find that an average of four calls must be made to make a sale. Consequently some companies, Banker's Life, for instance, send out letters to educate the prospect in the use and value of life insurance before they send a salesman to call. There is no type of business which may not build sales acceptance by mail.

*To prepare a dealer for a salesman's call and to follow-up his call.* When Hanan first came to Detroit to sell his make of shoe, he found that too much effort had to be expended in building a sales acceptance by personal interview. He went back to Boston and did educational work by newspaper advertising and direct by mail preparatory to a salesman's call.

*To sell direct by mail to a consumer.* If the right mailing list is chosen, a person can sell articles of relatively low prices by a single sales letter. Even high priced articles can be sold by mail by firms in whom the public has con-



fidence, or when enough advertising has been done to make the public appreciate the value of such articles.

*To sell direct by mail to a dealer.* The war period demonstrated to manufacturers and wholesalers that much selling which had formerly been accomplished by personal salesmen, could be accomplished by means of catalogues, letters, samples, and order blanks. This method is employed to sell dealers between salesman's calls, to sell in out of the way places, and when dealers are inaccessible at the time of a salesman's visit.

*To induce a customer to come to a store to buy.* Letters are used commonly by retail merchants to interest customers in special offerings or in seasonal offerings.

*To answer inquiries.* The purpose of much advertising is avowedly to create inquiries. Since the answers to these inquiries are as important a part of the merchandising chain to induce inquirers to become purchasers as is the writing of the advertisement which creates them, every reply should be a sales letter. For this reason, many firms, anticipating resultant inquiries carefully prepare form letters, or at least form paragraphs to answer them.

The material of the sales letter, the central selling point of a product, the sources of information about it and the prospect have been discussed in Chapter IX. How to plan this material in reference to the laws of focus and movement as well as to effect the mental journey of attention, interest, conviction, and action, which we desire our prospects to take, has been discussed briefly in Chapter X. Since, however, the best way of producing these mental steps, for all kinds of products, is a complex and not a simple matter, a more extended analysis of the qualities sought in the various steps and the ways to accomplish them will increase our power as salesmen and as writers. The following specimens of the types listed above are worthy of intensive analysis to this end.

*To advertise.* A type of sales letter now growing in use is designed to advertise a firm or a product, just as billboard, street-car, newspaper, and magazine advertisements

are used as means of gaining favorable attention. What characterizes these other forms of advertisements characterizes this kind of letter. Their principles of choice of appeals and presentation of appeals apply here. Though built on the plan of the magazine advertisement which includes a coupon to be clipped and mailed, the sales letter is more selective in its appeal and more personal in the presentation of its message. The test of its effectiveness is whether it causes the reader to request the information which a firm wishes to send. It may be catalogues, booklets, samples, further letters, or expert advice.

### *Illustration I*

The following letter represents a firm selling bonds. Its specific object is to get attention to a sales campaign, the purpose of which is to sell the idea of buying bonds on a systematic plan. The test of the success of the letter is whether the reader will manifest interest in the idea by reading the booklet *Independence*. As this letter was used for a very large and general mailing list, no inside address or salutation was filled in.

### AN INDEPENDENT INCOME

- |         |                                                                                            |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FIRST:  | Decide whether or not an Independent Income is <i>Worth While</i> .                        |
| SECOND: | If <i>Worth While</i> , invest your money safely. Do not Waste Funds or Speculate.         |
| THIRD:  | Make a study of results possible through safe investments made systematically.             |
| FOURTH: | Diversify in different forms of safe investments.                                          |
| FIFTH:  | Investigate the firm you choose to deal with and the kind of service they will render you. |

SIXTH: Making a *Start* is the most important step.

With the right start, an approximate investment of \$500 every six months will produce over \$20,000 in a little over 12 years, which sum invested at six per cent will return an income of \$1,200 a year.

Should you desire to invest—say \$1,000 every six months—this sum with the same start will produce the same result in a little over seven years, and in twelve years about \$37,000 will be accumulated, which would produce an income per annum of \$2,220.

All the foregoing statements are based on the investment of the principal amounts and the interest earnings at the annual rate of 6%.

INDEPENDENCE, the booklet we are sending you, contains further information along these lines. We can assist you in selecting bonds for diversifying your investments. We invite your inquiries concerning specific issues, particularly of public utility bonds.

Yours very truly,

### *Illustration II*

The purpose of this letter is to induce prospects to fill out blanks with the specific data as to their insurance costs, number and size of buildings, which enable the Blank Company to give a definite statement of the time necessary for a sprinkler system to pay for itself by lowering insurance costs. This letter was sent to firms operating plants in which there was considerable fire hazard. The inside address which was filled in, is omitted from this copy.

Gentlemen:

Subject: Self-paid Pinkertons

You would not sell your steady going business for the face value of your insurance policy. And yet fire at any moment may force you to make this losing exchange.

But you are not afraid of fire. You have not had a fire in twenty years, perhaps never. Neither had the victims of yesterday's score of big fires.

Yesterday's victims know today that their insurance money will not restore lost markets, orders, good-will, organization, and the whole going enterprise of yesterday. They see insurance for what it is, partial reparation.

Yesterday's victims know that fire hazards are really sleeping fires which wake suddenly to deal destruction. You are paying high insurance premiums because of these sleeping fires in your building.

If you will get the "Self-Paid Pinkertons of Fire Protection" to watch these sleeping fires, the insurance companies will reduce your rates enormously. The "Pinkertons" are sleepless, everywhere present, armed against fire—they are Blank Automatic Sprinklers. They make you safe. They earn big money for you. They are the biggest fact in fire insurance.

Find out how soon your Blank System will pay for itself by filling out the enclosed Fire Protection Blank. Don't wait. The delay may cost you your business. Get this corps of watchmen before your fire awakes.

Yours very truly,

### *Illustration III*

The following letter invites inquiries as to how what has been done for others may be done for the individual addressed.

Dear Sir:

In connection with your plans to push the sale of your auto lock, we are certain that you will be interested in what a carefully planned campaign did for the Erp Spare Rim Carrier which was put on the market last year by the Sedgwick Sales Co. of New York City.

In March, the Sedgwick Sales Co. came to us for suggestions. They wanted to sell entirely through jobbers but were having difficulty inducing jobbers to carry a stock. We suggest a campaign in *MOTOR AGE* which would not only appeal to the jobbers themselves but also bring inquiries from dealers which could be given to jobbers as proof that a market existed.

In October 75 jobbers were handling Erp Rim Carriers and by December 125,000 had been sold. In July the Sedgwick Co. had three men on the road and in October, the very time when business generally was "slower," they had seven.

We should be very glad to tell you more about how this was done and also to go into the subject of how we believe the sale of your auto lock could be stimulated in a similar manner.

Yours very truly,

#### *Illustration IV*

Along the left-hand side of the sheet on which the following letter was processed, there appeared attractive two-color cuts of the displays offered for soda fountains and windows.

Dear Sir:

You are making and selling mighty fine fresh fruit orangeades and lemonades,—we take that for granted. But are you taking full advantage of the advertising possibilities of these popular beverages to your general business?

These drinks are among the few being dispensed over your fountain that are made to order from the raw

materials. They are your drinks, not ours. For that reason, they should be featured constantly as your make. Upon fresh fruit orangeades and lemonades, you can build the reputation of your whole business.

We want to help you do this. For, in the last three years, these drinks have been responsible for new business averaging better than \$1,000 a year to fountains equipped to dispense them efficiently and at moderate cost.

The full facilities of our Dealer Service Department are placed at your disposal to help make this feature of your business a success. Our fountain and window displays are tangible examples of this service.

Mark the type of display you can use to the best advantage, return the enclosed card, and the material will be shipped to you promptly.

Yours very truly,

*To Prepare a Consumer for a Salesman's Call.* A letter preparing a customer for a salesman's call may do not only what the sales letter just illustrated does, but it may also effect succeeding steps in sales procedure. It may leave to a salesman the closing of an order, as does the first illustration given below. It may leave to him the last two steps in sales procedure, conviction and securing action, as does the second illustration. Or it may aim only at getting attention for him, leaving everything to the interview. If the sales letter follows the call, its function is often to turn interest into action, as is that of Illustration III.

Such letters are especially helpful where the amount involved is high relative to a person's total income, where it concerns a person's future needs more than his present wants, where the buying decision brings about consequences which cannot be easily changed. In products and services sold best by argument, repeated effort over a considerable period of time is often necessary to make a sale. The letter may in such cases accomplish what the salesman could



accomplish only by repeated calls. Sometimes it can accomplish more because it injects variety into the effort. The following sales letters, quoted as illustrations, have each been unusually successful.

### *Illustration I*

The following letter was typed on a very good grade of linen stationery which bore a conservative letterhead. The products manufactured appeared in a hair-line on either side of the printed letterhead, and a *photograph of the conveyor* was enclosed.

Gentlemen:

Savings of from 20% to 40% of the moulder's time form just one of the economies that enable modern foundry conveying systems to return their cost in two years, one year, or even less.<sup>1</sup>

The picture in this reprint shows part of a large carrousel, or circular conveyor used for carrying moulds from the moulders past the cupola, in the Lycoming Foundry plant in Williamsport, Pa. The next touches on some of the important new economies that are made in foundries by mechanical handling systems.

We should like an opportunity to tell you more about modern foundry conveying, particularly as applied to your own problems.

One of our foundry engineers will be glad to call and study your present handling methods, with the idea of suggesting how conveyors might help you save money, and increase your production per man.

Now is the time to investigate, so that your plant will be all ready to handle most economically the big business that everyone confidently expects in the fall.

May we have our engineer call at your plant?

Yours very truly,

<sup>1</sup> Reprint accompanied letter.

*Illustration II*

The following letter is the type of silent salesman that is helping thousands of agents to sell not only life insurance but other goods. It acts as the agent's partner and doubles his value to his house. Addressed to the prospect at his residence, it does not encroach upon crowded business hours, nor does it give arguments when the prospect is unwilling to listen. The date and inside address are omitted from the following copy:

Dear Sir:

Will you enter into a contract to save money systematically for yourself:

If it will be safe beyond question?

If it will show you a sure profit?

If it will remove the fear of want from your future after you are too old to work any longer?

If it will pay you a definite, never-failing salary on the same day of every month that you live after the age of 60 or 65?

Will you enter into that kind of contract if it will do for you:

What you cannot do through your Store?

What you cannot do through your Bank?

What you cannot do through your Farm?

What you cannot do through your Profession?

What you cannot do through your Will?

Will you enter into that contract if it will take your place in the business world, in the event of your pre-

mature death, and pay a definite, never-failing monthly income for life to your wife or children:

Which they cannot lose?

Which they cannot lend unwisely?

Which they cannot invest unwisely?

Which they cannot spend extravagantly?

Which cannot be stolen from them?

Will you enter into that contract if it will do more for you in a financial way than you can do for yourself? Then fill out the card and I will show you how easily it can be done.

Yours very truly,

### *Illustration III*

The following letter follows a salesman's call. This method of coöperating with a salesman's efforts provides for arguments to be presented fully which might seem long-winded in the mouth of the salesman. It permits them to be presented definitely and in a way to gain confidence. The typed word, although not so good as the printed word in gaining confidence, does carry more weight than the spoken word. The letter does the work of a second call without inviting an unfavorable reception such as a salesman would invite by repeating a call.

This letter was processed in small type on medium weight bond 8½ x 11 white paper, covering one and one third pages.

Dear Mr. Blank:

I am writing to thank you for the time you gave me yesterday in discussing the advertising of the Blank and to present the main facts of the Nast story

*Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House & Garden* have been built on a definite theory,—on the theory that out of the millions of people in America only a small fraction can become possible clients for just such organizations as the Blank. That is, only a small percentage have at once the culture to appreciate such a Blank and the means to afford it.

If you could avoid the expense of advertising to people who could never become your customers, and direct your appeal to the comparatively few who are real prospects, you would recognize it as a labor, time, and money saving proposition, wouldn't you?

It is with this thought in mind that the magazines of the Nast Group have been developed to appeal to the main interests of this cultured and wealthy class,—the class that does the real buying of quality products without hesitating because of the price. *Vogue* is for the woman primarily concerned with the matters of fashion and society; *Vanity Fair* appeals equally to men and women who want the latest in art, literature, sports, the stage, and amusements; *House & Garden* is designed for those most interested in the home.

*Vogue* has a net paid circulation of more than 130,000.

*Vanity Fair* has a net paid circulation of more than 85,000.

*House & Garden* has a net paid circulation of more than 115,000.

And the net paid circulation of the Group, because of the remarkably small interduplication, is greater than 300,000.

Thus, you see, instead of offering millions of heterogeneous circulation, we are offering 300,000 prospects who have always proved themselves to be real buyers of products if advertised in our pages.

It is the same principle that makes it more profitable for a florist to pay huge rent for a small booth in an exclusive hotel, where he can reach a few people who

are regular buyers of flowers,—than to set himself up in a less expensive and larger store on Broadway, where thousands of people pass his store,—and but few enter to buy.

Now I realize that your sales are not confined to the class that I have described. I know that you make many sales to people of much more moderate means. But you are already covering these people by the magazines you are now using.

The Nast magazines give you entry to a new and profitable market, and there you could undoubtedly open up a field that could not otherwise be reached.

You know our magazines. I am enclosing rate cards and, under separate cover, I am sending two pamphlets which contain pretty conclusive proof of the quality of the Nast market.

I hope that you will consider using the Nast Group in your advertising, for I feel very strongly that it will be of great benefit to you. If you have any questions, or if I can be of help to you in any way, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Very truly yours,

*To Prepare a Dealer for a Salesman's Call.* Letters help salesmen to sell to dealers as well as to consumers. They prepare the way; they follow up a call; they keep the channels of communication open between calls. The following examples illustrate the close relation between nationwide advertising campaigns and dealers' sales:

### *Illustration I*

Dear Mr. Blank:

Being a progressive dealer, you, no doubt, realize the advantages in selling Nationally Advertised Brands for which there is an established demand. Such mer-

chandise gives a quick turn-over of stock resulting in a very pleasing profit.

1847 Rogers Bros. Silverplate is and has always been the acknowledged leader among all brands of silverware. Its quality has been time tested for 75 years; its guarantee assures absolute satisfaction without time limit.

But the most important feature is the present advertising campaign on 1847 Rogers Bros. Silverplate—the most extensive and productive in silverware history. This full page, color campaign in the Ladies' Home Journal, Saturday Evening Post and other publications is actually opening up a new outlet for silverware sales in countless homes in your own vicinity which have *some* but not *enuf* silverware.

Why not bring a large share of this new business into your own store? This can be done by featuring 1847 Rogers Bros. Silverplate in your windows and on your show cases. The new twenty-six piece set shown in the enclosed illustration will particularly attract this trade to your store, for the beautiful case is furnished at no extra charge.

At the same time, selling these sets will mean the beginning of many silverware services and in consequence, many repeat orders. Your customers are reading 1847 Rogers Bros. advertisements and will come back frequently to add various pieces until their service is complete.

To help you establish a profitable silverware business, we send a wealth of display material including an eleven piece window display, velvet racks, imprinted circulars, electrotypes, lantern slides, etc. We shall be glad to give you this complete coöperation.

Our representative is going to call on you in a very few days to show you the attractive and salable patterns in 1847 Rogers Bros. Silverplate. He will also have some "live" and profitable information about this silverware opportunity which you will want to hear.

Very truly yours,



*Illustration II*

The following letter shows how a firm may keep good-will between salesmen's calls:

Gentlemen:

It was indeed a pleasure to learn from our New York Division Manager about the remarkable success which you have had in selling raisin bread since you first began featuring it in your stores a few months ago.

When one company such as yours, distributing its products through a chain of stores located in many sections of New York City where customers are drawn from all classes of people, can sell 75,000 loaves of raisin bread a month within less than two months after introducing the product, it proves what a strong hold raisin bread has already secured on the appetites of the American people.

No doubt, our New York Division Manager has told you of the phenomenal success which we have had in establishing the idea that "Wednesday is Raisin Bread Day" which we first adopted and began to feature in our advertising less than a year ago. Since that time we have increased the production of raisin bread by more than 300 per cent throughout the country, and individual bakers are baking and selling from 50 per cent to over 2,000 per cent more raisin bread than they did twelve months ago.

If you have any difficulty in making raisin bread, I hope that you will not hesitate to call upon us for any advice which we may be able to give you from our experience with this product. Our bakery demonstrators are constantly calling on the manufacturing bakery trade in an endeavor to assist them in producing a good quality loaf; and if you ever are in a position to take advantage of this service, I hope that you will not neglect to call upon us.

Very truly yours,

*To Sell Direct by Mail to the Consumer.* As stated earlier in this chapter, selling direct by mail to the consumer, or user, is no longer confined to mail-order houses, but is growing in favor among all classes of firms. Just as the mail-order catalogue leads to the filling out of order blanks, so does all good advertising of any firm prepare the way for the placing of orders by mail.

When a letter is used to bring in these orders, it depends for a part of its success upon the fact that the firm, the type of product, or even the trade name of the particular product has already been well established in the prospect's mind.

### *Illustration I*

The following letter, to sell raincoats, is an example of the mail-order letter or it may be part of a wear out series discussed in Chapter XXII. The letter has all the elements of a complete sales letter in either case. The solicitation is made by means of a single sales letter. Its effectiveness does not depend necessarily upon the wide reputation of the firm it represents, but upon the assurance of satisfaction from mail-order buying in general, an assurance which firms like Montgomery Ward and Company, Sears, Roebuck and Company, and The Larkin Company have created.

This letter, sent in the spring to men on the faculty of colleges and universities, was not prepared for by any advertising campaign. Nevertheless, in spite of the proverbially skeptical attitude of this class of prospects, the letter boldly capitalizes the unusualness of its proposition, and goes far toward winning confidence by the use of the names of nationally known men.

A \$30 COAT  
FOR \$17.85

Dear Sir:

May I send you—direct to your office or home—without the slightest expense or obligation—one of our famous Blank Coats?

Wouldn't you like to examine this raincoat that is being worn today with so much satisfaction by over 36,000 prominent men, including hundreds of Professors in our Colleges and Universities, in all parts of the United States?

Won't you judge for yourself—with absolutely no risk on your part—whether this coat isn't the most WANTED, the most SENSIBLE, and the most PRACTICAL improvement ever made in out-door coats for the well-dressed man?

Sounds too good to be true? Yes, but for five years men like yourself—Dr. Blank, of Harvard, for example—have enjoyed the comfort of “Blank” Coats.

Congressman John G. Blank, of Blank, our new Interstate Commerce Commissioner, says, “I am certainly well pleased with my ‘Blank.’”

E. K. Blank, Vice-President of the Blank, Blank & Blank Co., “It is so good that I am at a loss to understand how you can sell it for such a small price.”

Is it any wonder that over 36,000 men pronounce “Blank” the final word in outdoor coats—when it affords snug protection in the wettest weather—when its “dressy” appearance enables you to wear it on pleasant days as well as on rainy days?

Please don't misunderstand. I do not want you to purchase a “Blank” unless you decide you actually want the coat. I simply want you to wear it a week—to give it a severe test—and then decide whether you can afford to be without it. I want you to be just as fully pleased as C. F. Blank, President of the National Bank of Blank, was when he wrote:

“You allow me seven days. I needed only seven minutes to decide. You will find my check enclosed.”

My offer is very simple: Just drop the enclosed Special Privilege Card in the mail. I'll send you a “Blank”—in your exact size—right to your home,

all charges prepaid. Examine it carefully. Wear it for a full week, if you want to. Be severe in your criticism. Then, if you don't think the coat is worth many times its cost, return it to me and accept my thanks for having examined it.

Could any offer be fairer?

Mail the card NOW and be prepared for comfort in the rainy weather that is coming soon.

Sincerely yours,

### *Illustration II*

The following letter is a pleasing variation of the type of sales letter which encloses an order blank, a stamped addressed envelope, or a postal card, and ends: "Just drop the card in the mail," or "Enclose a dollar bill," etc. The enclosed card referred to on which the "vote" is to be mailed is really an order blank. The tabloid was a miniature *Cosmopolitan*.

Dear Sir:

Are you EYE-MINDED?

That is, does your mind respond most readily to what you see? Rather than to what you hear or read?

This interesting test will determine:

Attached is a little tabloid giving flashes from the November and December issues of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

Your subscription, you remember, lapsed some time ago. An eminent psychologist, looking over my several letters to you about it, said I had failed to picture *Cosmopolitan*. And so I had this folder prepared.

Was he right? Are most Americans EYE-MINDED? I would appreciate your vote on the enclosed card.

Yours very truly.

*Illustration III*

The securing of dates for a jazz orchestra is among the more recently developed functions of the versatile mail-order sales letter. The following example was used with a mailing list including names of entertainment committees of clubs and fraternities in the vicinity of Chicago:

*It's Town Talk!*

That "HUSK" O'HARE ORCHESTRAS are famous for subtleties of rhythm and melodic tricks with Dance Music.

To describe "HUSK" O'HARE MUSIC is to make words like "resistless," "symphonic," "subtle" and "tantalizing" walk out of a dictionary into real life.

They are the most startling, smartest, and jolliest Orchestras in the world. With their youth incarnate, talent, personality, and ability, they give syncopated Music a new meaning.

"HUSK" O'HARE ORCHESTRAS get so much out of toe-tickling harmonies that some persons in their audiences start out after their performances without their hats, still dancing hilariously.

What say—an early reservation for your next dancing event?

*Always At Your Service,*

*To Sell Direct by Mail to the Dealer.* The letter selling direct by mail either to the consumer or to the dealer reaches its highest efficiency only in connection with other methods of selling. Thus, it usually follows advertising in magazines and catalogues, and salesmen's calls, which have performed various steps in sales procedure.

*Illustration I*

The following form letter, with a caption but no salutation, was used with a four-color circular to introduce a new offer to dealers already handling the product. Its success was due to the fact that advertising and sales over a long period of time had created confidence in the trade name of "Rogers Bros., 1847 Silver."

1847 ROGERS BROS. SILVERPLATE LEADS AGAIN.

Never before has silverware been more attractively displayed than in the new chest shown on the enclosed folder.

The coloring of this chest provides a beautiful background for the silverware. At the same time its display value is unique because of the spread of pieces, racked in threes, and the placing of the knives in the cover. There is, of course, no charge for the chest itself, for it is a successor to the previous give-away case which we originated *to enable the dealer to increase his sales.*

Displaying this new chest of 1847 ROGERS BROS. Silverplate will be the means of your selling more silverware than ever before. The advantage of buying a full set and receiving the chest gratis will be obvious to your customers. Each set that you sell will mean the beginning of a new silverware service in a home.

Additional staple pieces as well as fancy half-dozens and serving pieces will soon be purchased, for your customers are reading regularly the 1847 Rogers Bros. advertisements in the Saturday Evening Post, Ladies' Home Journal, and other magazines, and these advertisements are convincing them of the need for an adequate silverware equipment.

Display these new chests in your window and store. Then tie up to our business-producing campaign



and sell your customers the additional pieces in 1847 ROGERS BROS. Silverplate to fill out their services.

You will want to be among the first to exhibit this new 1847 ROGERS BROS. chest, which is the last word in merchandising staple pieces. We suggest that your order be placed at once, either with your jobber or direct, in order that you may be sure of prompt delivery.

The enclosed order blank is for your convenience.

Yours very truly,

### *Illustration II*

The type of letter which aims to introduce to a dealer a new line of goods is exemplified by the following. Its success depends not upon the trade name, but upon the fact that this manufacturer has in the past sold the dealers addressed other lines of toys on which they realized a good profit.

Gentlemen:

This year little kiddies will be asking Santa Claus to bring them TWINZY TOYS, and we wonder if you will have some on the shelves in your store for them.

TWINZY TOYS retail from 25 cents to \$1.50. They are made from fleecy pink, blue, red, and orange materials. They are stuffed with kapoc, have voice in bodies, and are hand painted.

FIDO, TOM CAT, BOY BLUE, and PETER RABBIT are our latest creations. They have a special "twin" feature which distinguishes them from all other toys. They are large, lovable cuddle toys that appeal to both mother and child.

The enclosed folder shows how eye-catching they are. But we want our toys to convince you of their worth themselves. Let us send you our \$5.00 or \$10.00 assortment. We know you will be pleased with the profits.

Yours truly,

*Illustration III*

The following letter aims to stimulate sales of a certain stock number, already known to the dealers, but not moving as rapidly as the manufacturer wishes. A little extra effort spent on this number may result in repeat orders.

## COLUMBIA DEALERS.

Gentlemen:

There is a story of ancient Spain—about the government prohibiting a certain selection from being played because it would attract the people to such an extent that work would stop.

We happened to play “DELILAH” for ourselves the other day, and so many people in our office wanted to know what the selection was that the Spanish incident came to our mind.

Get “DELILAH” from your shelves and play it for yourself. If you haven’t it, get it at once from us and catch some extra business on a beautiful waltz. It is one of the prettiest waltzes that CHAS. A. PRINCE, unquestionably the master, has ever recorded.

“DELILAH” won’t be “IN SHADOWLAND” if you will only play this record for your customers, and you need not fear the government stopping you.<sup>1</sup>

Yours very truly,

*To Induce a Customer to Come to a Store to Buy.* Letters asking customers to come to a store to buy are directed either to holding old customers and getting the most trade possible by giving them better service, or to gaining new customers. Effort directed to either end is sometimes initiated by manufacturers as a part of their service to help retail

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. Kapp, Columbia Graphophone Co. Reprinted by permission.

dealers resell their merchandise. The service may include supplying stationery, letterheads, booklets, and text of letters free or on a cost-sharing basis. Manufacturers of clothing send out such letters by the hundreds of thousands, to correlate with other "dealer-help" devices such as newspaper copy, electrotypes, posters, painted signboards, films, slides, and style books.

The letters are processed usually on the retail dealer's letterhead, thus helping to tie up local advertising with national advertising. The service offered to the dealer may include fill-ins of names and addresses of customers, signatures cut and made, signatures put on, longhand signatures imitated, typewriting of letters, and addressing of envelopes. This practice helps to keep the standard of local advertising higher than it would otherwise be; the attempt is to make it as high as is the national advertising of the manufacturer. The result is the stimulation of trade for the local dealer.

### *Illustration I*

Letter from newly opened store of a chain system, to wealthy suburbanites.

Dear Sir:

A number of well-known North Side residents who have been driving too fast past our new Oriental Rug Store at 302 North Michigan Avenue, just missed seeing us.

You cannot buy anything but Oriental Rugs in this new store, and we are told by several connoisseurs that our stock is one of the finest in the city. We want you to be the judge, but we cannot help feeling proud of several hundred very rare pieces we have on display.

Oriental rugs reflect prosperity—they wear a couple of lifetimes—no article of furnishing in any home is more admired.

By importing and handling on a mammoth business plan, we have been able to bring Orientals within the reach of more people. Many homes are starting with just one or two and will add each year.

Here are twelve ideas of values, and if you can act while our "Get Acquainted" prices are in effect you will save something worth while—your choice of several hundred:

|                |         |       |                 |           |        |
|----------------|---------|-------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| #512 Daghestan | 2x2-4   | \$16. | #407 Sarouk     | 3-1x5-2   | \$175. |
| #509 Sniraz    | 2-6x4-3 | 35.   | #924 Lilihan    | 5-6x6-4   | 185.   |
| #801 Ispahan   | 3-4x5-3 | 50.   | #106 Kirmanshah | 4-3x6-8   | 225.   |
| #210 Mosul     | 4x7     | 85.   | #910 Lilihan    | 8-2x8-3   | 450.   |
| #511 Kurd      | 3-8x9-6 | 110.  | #903 Lilihan    | 10-9x14-6 | 975.   |
| #304 Dozar     | 4-8x6-9 | 125.  | #404 Sarouk     | 9-3x4-8   | 1475.  |

You are invited to visit this interesting display of beautiful Orientals. You will not be importuned to buy.

Very truly yours,

### *Illustration II*

Letter from local dealer to car owners.

Dear Sir:

When you bought your car from us you immediately became a partner in this business. We are just as much concerned in keeping and increasing your interest and good-will as we were in gaining it.

Whenever we find anything which will increase your pleasure in your car, and cut down the work or expense of operation, it becomes a duty as well as a pleasure to pass the information on to you.

That is why we write you now about the Gas-co-lator.

All of us know how delicate an instrument the carburetor is; we know it is important to adjust it to the point of greatest economy and have it remain so adjusted.

The things which most often throw the carburetor out of adjustment are dirt and water. In spite of all precautions, dirt and water get through the fuel line, work into the delicate mechanism, and cause trouble.

The Gas-co-lator, through a unique system of upward filtration, eliminates every particle of foreign substance from the gasoline just before the gas passes into the carburetor.

In addition to its utility, the Gas-co-lator is a very attractive instrument. Installed on the dash, it adds to the business-like appearance of the car. You will find pleasure and comfort in the assurance it gives that an abundance of clean gasoline is instantly at your command, whatever the emergency.

Stop in the first time you are down this way, and let us show you the Gas-co-lator.

### *Illustration III*

Letter from local clothing store to mothers of school boys.

Dear Madam:

A boy expects the nicest of all his Christmas gifts to be in the package marked "From Mother."

And nothing could be nicer, surely, than a smart-looking suit, "tailored like Father's," or a sturdy, comfortable overcoat, with deep pockets and high, warm collar.

In our boy's department we have a splendid stock of clothes made by Hart Schaffner & Marx—stylish, well-tailored quality clothes.

They're the best things we know for that package marked "From Mother."

Yours truly,

P. S. There are other suggestions in the enclosed booklet.

*To Answer Inquiries.* The importance of the letter which, as has been pointed out, answers an inquiry either uninvited or solicited by sales letters and advertising, is due to its place in the merchandising chain. It has the power of helping to bring advertising effort to fruition or of nullifying advertising effort. It requires the same skill in salesmanship as does advertising. Its direct cost depends upon the factors necessary to produce it, but its indirect cost includes profits on sales which it fails to make.

In Chapter XII, the discussion of answering inquiries was limited to such cases as require only a single letter to answer the question. A comprehensive treatment of answers to inquiries would necessitate a treatise on sales campaigns, including catalogues, booklets, brochures, and demonstrations which the limits of a text on business letters do not permit. The sales follow-up answering inquiries is included in Chapter XXII.



## CHAPTER XX

### SALES PRESENTATION · ATTENTION AND INTEREST

#### A. Attention-getting Qualities of Beginnings

1. *You-Attitude*
2. *Positive and Negative Beginnings*
3. *Direct and Indirect Beginnings*
4. *Specific and General Beginnings*
5. *Original Beginnings*
6. *Appropriate Beginnings*

#### B. Form of Presentation of the Opening Idea

1. *Question Type*
2. *Command Type*
3. *Statement Type*
4. *Condition Type*
5. *Story Type*

#### C. Means of Arousing Interest

1. *Directing Attention to a Conscious Need*
2. *Discovering a Latent Need*
3. *Relating the Product to a Need*
4. *Describing the Product in Terms of Its Use*
5. *Emphasizing the Distinguishing Features of a Product*
6. *Using Price as a Talking Point*

#### D. Developing the Opening Idea Properly

1. *Timeliness in Mentioning the Product*
2. *Vividness in Description by Use*
3. *Coherence in Arrangement of Ideas*

#### E. Building Value into the Product

Analysis of any one of the letters quoted in the foregoing chapter, whether its purpose is to induce the customer to send an inquiry, to ask for a booklet, to request a salesman to call, to come to an office, to go to a store to buy, or to place an order, supports the statement that an effective sales letter causes a reader to take four steps in his mental journey:

1. Favorable attention.
2. Active interest, or desire.
3. Conviction.
4. Action.

An analysis of beginnings, development, and endings with special reference to letters just quoted will, moreover, show by what means these four steps are induced. The characteristics of beginnings with sales quality enumerated in Chapter V page 81, and when to plan the beginning discussed in Chapter VIII, page 158, should be recalled.

Chapter X on Planning the Mail-Order Sales Letter has suggested the considerations preliminary to writing a sales letter. These same considerations will condition the beginning of a letter which will gain favorable attention: Who is the prospect? What is his attitude to the firm sending out the letter? What is his attitude toward the product? The beginning of the letter, as its other elements, its substance, and its style can be fairly judged only on the basis of circumstances, purpose, and occasion, which determine appropriateness.

Sales letters seek favorable attention. The reason for this is obvious: favorable attention causes a letter to be read. If the letter fails to get attention, it is lost, no matter how dynamic its message may be. Devices to catch the reader's eye and arouse his interest are, hence, to advertise the message. They should create the harmony of feeling between seller and buyer out of which interest springs. Buying and selling are more than an interchange of profit; they are first of all an interchange of thought and feeling.

No rule of thumb for the make-up of letters, appearance of opening paragraphs, or their message, will insure favorable attention of all readers for all sales letters, but there are certain principles which thinking, reasoning people find helpful. The letter which is pleasing and different from the other letters in the mail will be opened. It may be opened on account of its luxurious appearance, produced by excellent quality of paper, engraved or lithographed card address, and rich color; or because it seems to be personal, a quality produced by a hand-addressed envelope of a size used for personal correspondence; or on account of curiosity aroused by some note or design printed on the envelope.

When a person unfolds a letter, his first impression will determine whether or not he will find the letter hard to read. A long opening paragraph or long first sentence is likely to suggest hard reading. A comparison of the two following paragraphs, each beginning a sales letter, will illustrate this point:

### *Illustration I*

Dear Puretest

Business Builder:

Here is a real leader for you!

Puretest Rubbing Alcohol Compound.

Puretest Rubbing Alcohol Compound.

### *Illustration II*

To My Clients,  
Everywhere, U. S. A.

Gentlemen:

The coat situation for the past week has been remarkable. In fact, it is very strange that at this time there should be such a tremendous demand for coats. The weather has been warm down here and still coats

are being continually asked for. No other line seems to be selling, and usually when business is bad, everything else is slow. While most of the coat houses have stopped making Fall coats, there are quite a few houses at present making up desirable merchandise for sales purposes. Some of these houses are very busy. The merchants we have spoken to from all over the country all seem to agree that this is going to be quite a coat season, and for that reason they continue buying.

**Attention-Getting Qualities of Beginnings.**<sup>1</sup>—If the general appearance of the letter is inviting, the opening sentence, if properly worded, can be depended upon to focus attention on the message and to develop interest. In general, beginnings which have the power of creating a favorable impression are marked by the following qualities:

1. *"You attitude."*
2. *Positive rather than negative wording.*
3. *Directness.*
4. *Specific rather than general idea.*
5. *Originality.*
6. *Appropriateness.*

*"You Attitude."* In most of the letters quoted in Chapter XIX the opening paragraphs get attention by virtue of being worded in terms to fit the reader's point of view. This approach is a corollary to the great principle of *"you attitude"* which governs the composition of successful letters of all kinds. Any remark that will fasten the attention of the reader on himself is more interesting than that which calls attention to the writer or a third person. A comparison of the following sentences which were used as beginnings of sales letters will bear this out:

A letter to sell shoes begins:

"We note"      In order to take care of the exceptionally heavy demands made upon us for

<sup>1</sup> See "Beginnings," Chapter V.

our shoes, we have put into operation additional factories and have increased the capacity of our already-big factories. The fact of the matter is that the improvements in some of the factories have enabled us to double their production.

One to sell advertising space begins:

“You note”      If you could put \$375 into an advertisement and get more than \$800. . . .

The impersonal is suggested in the following:

“They note”      As the holiday season draws near, the speedy transaction of business becomes increasingly important. With many patrons doing their Christmas shopping early, it will frequently be found necessary to replenish stocks which become depleted by the heavier seasonal buying or to procure quickly special articles for discriminating shoppers.

The “you note” may be given greater stress by referring in the opening sentence to a detail that makes a letter fit a specialized group or even a single person.

### *Illustration I*

As a member of Phi Beta Kappa you are interested in a different type of magazine from the general reader.

### *Illustration II*

If I were in the market for portable schools, and you told me that they were used in such industrial centers as Gary, Indiana, you would have given me good reason to believe that they were the right school for communities which want good school-houses and want them in a hurry.

*Positive and Negative Beginnings.* Positive beginnings are usually to be preferred to negative beginnings because they attract while negative beginnings repel. They are in tune with the living and growing things. The principle they represent is constructive. Why human nature responds better to vivid painting of paradise to be gained than of purgatory to be avoided is hard to explain, but sales letter writers cannot afford to ignore the fact.

The following questions carry promise. They have a forward look.

With the period of business readjustments here—are you prepared? Can you step right out of your war-time tune of endeavor, back into your old place?

The merit of the negative beginning can be judged only in relation to the purpose it is intended to accomplish. In this light the following should be considered:

### *Illustration I*

First sentence of a letter selling printing, binding, engraving, and lettergraphing.

Today you are face to face with a declining market. Your problems are big and must be solved now. Your greatest desire is to stimulate sales, and you want concrete evidence of how it can be done.

### *Illustration II*

Beginning of a letter selling an investment service.

With call money at 20%—broker's loans conservatively estimated at \$2,000,000,000—banking reserves below the danger point and labor unrest general—what's going to happen? A Stock Market Collapse!

### *Illustration III*

Beginning sentence of a letter selling a correspondence school course.



I once figured that I throw into my waste basket every year at least \$50 worth of literature which people send me in the mistaken notion that I have nothing to do but to read.

In general the negative opening should suggest a predicament so unpleasant that the reader of the letter will look to the writer to help him out of this predicament. It will be successful if it reaches a man with a good fighting spirit, an optimist who can see a rift in a cloud. Its ill effect on the weak and the timid is hard to overcome in the rest of the letter.

An apologetic opening in a letter invites criticism just as does the apologetic remark in a conversation.

We are very sorry indeed that we cannot see you at your office to-day. Circumstances do not permit. The best we can do is to let this letter take its place.

Sometimes the negative opening takes the form of criticism. It is difficult to believe that there are people who like it. They must belong to the class of people who have to be angry to become interested.

Attention Mr. President:

Ninety percent of the troubles of business are traceable to the door of management.

Your employees will follow if you will properly lead them.

A "No Help Wanted" sign on the employment office door very often means that the president's office needs help.

Do you want criticism that will be constructive, backed up by a guarantee to produce results?

Our service will deal with the facts, regardless of whom it hits or the policies it may encounter.

Respectfully,

*Direct and Indirect Beginnings.* "Your attitude" and personal openings are likely to be direct. A letter selling a vacuum cleaner begins:

Do you know from actual experience what your wife has to contend with in house work?

One selling water purifier begins:

Being a yacht owner, you have the problem of supplying yourself and guests with safe and pure drinking water on every cruise.

One selling buttons begins.

You make sweaters.

We make buttons for buttoning them.

You want sweaters nicely trimmed and buttoned.

One selling window cleaner begins:

We understand you are going to wash the windows of your factory in the near future.

Indirect openings try people's patience. When they open the morning's mail they are all attention to know what meaning the mail or any one letter has for them. They are less in a mood to read essays than they are after dinner in the evening. A reader in his eagerness to come to the point of a letter will either skip such an opening as the following or throw the letter into the waste basket unread:

Dear Sir:

Modern science has accomplished wonderful things. Just think what it has done for the housewife. She can be a better housekeeper than her grandmother and still have time for social enjoyment and mental development.

Since man became civilized, the fight against dirt has been a constant care on the shoulders of humanity, particularly of women. In recent years, people's dislike for dirt has been intensified by the knowledge that disease germs live and multiply in dirt.

Gentlemen:

American industry has struck its stride and in practically every department of activity the tide is strongly flowing. It appears to be the consensus of opinion of our leading financiers and business men that no immediate interruption threatens. Sane handling of the various problems confronting us will result in a continued period of prosperity.

The transition from stagnation to activity is reflected in the increased demand for our Mechanical Tubing, and we take this opportunity of emphasizing the importance of sufficiently anticipating your requirements.

*Specific and General Beginnings.* Specific openings, which are adapted to the person addressed, catch the reader's attention better than general statements, which he may either fail to apply to himself at all or apply only half heartedly. A letter which begins:

You can keep your children on the farm by making your farm home attractive,

will attract more farmers' attention to building materials than one which begins:

America was over 60% rural not so many years ago. Now only 25% of the population live on farms.

Similarly,

You can save the cost of one repainting by using *Cemcral*,

centers the attention on paint better than:

In these days of high costs and keen competition it is important to keep maintenance charges at a minimum.

*Original Beginnings.* Original ideas, or even old ideas originally framed, create favorable first impressions. The usual thing meets with apathy and indifference, while the new stimulates curiosity. The beginning of a letter for building material:

Putting off until next year repairs that should be made this fall is like stopping a clock to save time,

excites more attention than:

Neither time nor decay waits for any man.

Striking statements such as the following are sure to gain attention if the mailing list is well selected:

The other day we gathered together a batch of successful selling letters of which 17 had pulled an average of 31% replies.

On the other hand, the trite opening statement is often the reason why letters are thrown in the waste basket unread. For example:

If you read the papers, you doubtless realize the need for greater care in driving automobiles.

*Appropriate Beginnings.* The qualities of good beginnings can be summed up in the word *appropriate*. The purpose of the beginning sentences is to make the reader well disposed toward the substance of a letter, to make him attentive to the message of the letter, and open to conviction. While in most cases the most direct way into a subject is the best way, at times it is necessary to start on neutral ground if the person addressed is in any measure hostile to a house. The neutral openings are also useful when the writer of the

sales letter is attempting to connect his message with something in which the reader is interested. Such a beginning is the following:

In connection with your plans to push the sale of your auto lock, we are certain that you will be interested in what a carefully planned campaign did for the Erp Spare Rim Carrier.

One less personalized, but one directed to the same end is:

It is pretty hard, nowadays, to get results from "hiding your light under a bushel." Everyone is telling everybody else of the excellence of his product, and he who keeps still does little business.

Timeliness in the openings is likewise helpful in putting a product among a reader's interests. Two examples:

You are soon to be graduated from high school. What you do *next* is of the utmost importance.

The holiday season is approaching and with it a growing demand for playthings.

Appropriateness in beginnings seldom means eccentric, startling, vaudeville qualities; certainly these are the exception rather than the rule. Like the alarm clock, the winking electric signs, they may catch the attention, but they have little power to give it the direction desired. A letter selling casement windows begins:

None of us in the building game knows much about women's hats; anyways *we* don't.

Another, selling something whose nature is kept in deep mystery, intrigues only the gullible:

I am afforded the pleasure and opportunity of sending you absolutely free and entirely at my own expense, something which may change the whole course of your

life and cause you to enjoy more real happiness and prosperity than you have ever dreamed possible.

**Form of Presentation of Opening Idea.**—An appropriate initial idea can be given greater power by its form of presentation. The message should be in a language that is readily understood and of a type that suits the circumstances of the case. Types of beginning commonly used to give the initial idea attention-getting value, are:

1. *Question*
2. *Command*
3. *Statement*
4. *Condition*
5. *Story*

Choice of a type depends upon the same factors that determine the qualities of the beginning; the relation of the firm to the prospect or customer; the newness of the product; the nature of the product; the character of the customer; circumstances of time and place.

*Question Type.* Although the question type of beginning has lost somewhat in value by being over-worked and rendered ridiculous through the proposing of questions the answers to which are so obvious as to seem foolish, it still has merit. Its phrasing must be such as will center the reader's attention on himself and make the question pertinent to the product. The following sentences illustrate the question type of opening:

#### *Illustration I*

1. How many men did you discharge today?
2. Have you figured the total cost of tool replacement for the past year?
3. Would you be willing to take the necessary steps to save 10% on your gas bill?
3. Do you believe in dreams? We do! And that dream of a home of your own can be realized.



*Command Type.* The command easily gains favorable attention from that great body of people who like to be relieved of responsibility of making decisions, who are accustomed to being told what to do. It carries a tone of authority which creates confidence such as young people have in older people and the less experienced in the more experienced. The following letters illustrate the skillful use of the command:

Dear Sir:

When you buy your next automobile tires, make certain of two things:

*First*, that the maker has a reputation for building mileage into the tire.

*Second*, that the tread of the tire is more than a fancy design.

Not only has Blank an enviable reputation of long standing for building tires of consistently long mileage, but the Kant-Slip tread on Blank tires holds the road. It is a safe, sure-footed, scientifically constructed tread that lives up to its name.

.....

Yours truly,

Dear Sir:

IMAGINE views brought up to one-eighth the distance with detail sharp and clear.

IMAGINE being able to see, clearly, eight times as far as you do now.

These are only two of the many advantages to be gained from the use of a binocular.

.....

Very truly yours,

*Statement Type.* The statement type of beginning of a sales letter is even more frequent than the question type. It may take the form of a widely accepted adage—"A stitch in time saves nine," or "A penny saved is a penny earned." But it is usually more effective if it is new, brilliant, or astonishing. It should never be pointless or inappropriate.

It may take the form of a matter-of-fact, highly reasonable statement to which one will so readily agree that the habit of agreeing is carried over into the second statement, which usually should be something about the product. The following paragraph, for example, begins a letter to sell a service devised to speed up turn-over of stock:

Your purchase of any merchandise is the easiest part of the transaction for you. After that comes the important part—disposing of the merchandise at a profit. *Turnover* tells the story of its worth to you.

The statements may be strong ones which require strong proof and which pique one's curiosity to know the proof.

#### *Illustration I*

There is going to be a crash in the stock market, and this in the not distant future.

#### *Illustration II*

The safest thing in the world which you can buy is reputation.

#### *Illustration III*

Dear Friend:

Success without culture is like strawberry short-cake without whipped cream.

Every-day you come into contact with people who judge you by what you do and say. To them you are either coarse and unpolished, or cultured and well-

bred. You may be dressed in the height of fashion, you may be a great financial success—but one blunder in etiquette, and you are condemned as a hopeless plebeian.

### *Illustration IV*

Dear Sir:

An old soldier said the other day, "The best thing to live for is to help the other fellow have a good time." That means coöperation.

*Condition Type.* People will often give less prejudiced consideration to an impersonal assertion prefaced by a condition than they will to a direct question or command. When an attempt is made deliberately to influence thought by logical processes rather than by persuasion, the first step is to induce the reader to agree to a standard of comparison. The second step is to show the prospect that the product, judged by this standard of comparison, excels. Conditions are proposed in *if clauses* for the same reason that impersonal standards of comparison are introduced. People will accept the supposition without prejudice before it is applied to them. The *if clause* has also the merit of presenting a fact vividly to the imagination. It may suggest a make-believe game, as does the phrase, "Let's play, etc.," so frequently used in childhood.

### *Illustration I*

The condition which proposes a standard of comparison:

If you wish a car that is beautiful and economical,  
buy a .....

### *Illustration II*

The condition which "puts you there" in imagination:

If you were in Paris to-day, you would be visiting the fashion makers of the world.

*Illustration III*

The condition which is preposterous:

If this letter were printed on a Ten Dollar Bill, it could scarcely be more valuable to you than the message it contains.

*Story Type.* The narrative form of opening gains attention by taking advantage of a trait of human nature which is as old as the race, the love of a story. Long before writing began, stories were told. The phrasing which suggests a story makes the reader curious about what is to follow, just as does the story teller's "Once upon a time," which transports children into an imaginative realm.

The success of using the story form in the opening consists in making the story so pertinent to the message which the letter is to carry, that it will not seem to be dragged in for its own sake. The following tells a story with a point directly applicable to the sales message of the letter and suggestive of many details of value in the service offered:

Dear Mr. Blank:

You've heard the story of the typical American family leaving home in their Universal car, who were subjected to two or three narrow escapes and pretty badly frightened, when someone in the rear seat inquired of the driver, "Where are we going anyway?"

"To a picnic," he replied.

"Well, why can't the picnic begin when we leave home?"

In planning a trip to California this season, you can "begin the picnic when you leave home" by traveling on the popular "Golden State Limited."

.....

Yours sincerely,

There must not be an abrupt change of tone when the story is finished and the purpose of the letter is introduced. In the following letter the point of the story—"making you feel like doing something big"—is not easily applicable to the sales message of the letter:

Mr. & Mrs. Everyman,  
U. S. A.

Remember long ago, when as a youngster, you heard the band coming down the street. First, the drums would go "dr-r-r rum-tum, d-r-r rum-tum" like that—they would be a long way off. Then, quick-like, as they came close, the fife and horns and everything would come in, making you feel strange, like fighting for somebody or something, making you feel like doing something big.

This is just an invitation. We are inviting you to renew your acquaintance with some of the old time pieces that stirred you long ago.

.....  
Musically yours,

Similarly, the following example is not successful, for there is an abrupt change of tone in the middle:

Gentlemen:

Perhaps you read the story in your papers the other day—it appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* Wednesday, September 15—of the ex-sailor who offered himself for sale for five thousand dollars.

Certainly unusual, but as the article stated, present laws make it highly improbable that he will find a buyer.

What struck me particularly was the similarity of this fellow's offer to one we make every day—with the difference that acceptance of ours costs a fraction of the

other, with no upkeep, and is capable of rendering considerably more service.

Our Economy Portable Elevators will serve you  
 .....  
 .....

Yours truly,

Before concluding the discussion of beginnings which catch the favorable attention of readers, we need to remind amateur writers that letters are built best from the end, not from the beginning. The idea which will interest the reader,—his welfare, comfort, ambition, and desire to make money,—can be selected only in relation to the ultimate purpose to be accomplished. The writer who starts with a device to gain attention unrelated to his ultimate purpose and immediate procedure, comes to a full stop at the end of the first step.

### Means of Arousing Interest.

*Directing Attention to a Conscious Need.* The success of the second step in the sales presentation, *getting the reader's interest*, depends very much upon the appropriateness of the first step. If the beginning has thought-producing qualities and directs attention toward the right point, it also helps to arouse interest. The first sentences should not leave the reader cold, nor allow him to say mentally, "Yes, but what of it?" This can be avoided by aiming the opening shot at one of the reader's vital interests or needs. Properly developing the thought suggested in the beginning is usually the most direct way to create desire. This is done successfully in the following example:

#### GO AFTER 'EM!

If you haven't as yet inaugurated a Stout Dress Department, take our word for it—investigate! Mind you, 37% of the ready-to-wear business today is with Stouts. And they are, for the most part, mothers who control the family purse.



By all means please the Stouts! Give them style! Give them color! Fit them properly! Honestly, there breathes no more appreciative soul than the pleased stout woman! Gain her confidence once, and her family, friends, and neighbors, are your patrons forever.

But purchase your Stout dresses carefully! Be sure of your sizes! See that a real Jersey silk lining is used! Look for ample room in muscle and hip! Get elastic beltings! But above all, select *style*! Styles of the latest mode for Fall. For remember, the Stout woman buys ready-to-wear to look as smart and dressy as her slim sister. And there are 37% of these "Stouts" in your town.

To aid you in making the most of this Stout trade, the "Queen of Stouts" dresses, product of the Blank Stout Dress Company, were introduced. These, in over one hundred styles, come in Cantons, Satin Cantons, and Flat Crêpes at \$21.75—and in Poiret Twills at \$19.75. Size ranges: 40½ to 52½.

.....

Very truly yours,

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the success of creating interest in one's product depends first upon finding a man's vital interests in the problems that concern his comforts, his habits, his ambitions, his desire for gain, his self-esteem, and his fear of loss. Or to name these vital interests more concretely, he is interested in a profitable and growing business, a house, a car, or clothes in which he takes pride; he fears accidents, ill health, or bad investments.

*Discovering a Latent Need.* If the salesman cannot find a vital interest, his problem is, then, to make a latent need active. Well men do not feel the need of health insurance; vigorous men do not feel the need of old age pensions; care-free youths do not feel the need of an education. Moreover, needs progress. If this were not so, advertising and salesmanship could not raise the standards of living in the United

States by selling the people *better* automobiles, putting *better* shoes on their feet, giving them *better* homes and *better* food.

*Relating the Product to a Need.* The writer, when once he has discovered a man's interests or made latent interests active, has then to show the relation between his commodity or service and the reader's interest. He has to show a man perhaps that owning bonds will give him the means by which he can take advantage of an opportunity when it occurs. He has to show him that an investment will mean having a home in an attractive part of the city, knowing interesting people, or traveling. He has to show him that insurance will mean freedom from worry about failure or dependence. He has to make him think of an overstuffed chair as bringing joy and comfort on evenings at home. He has to appeal to his pride in owning the fastest car, or motorboat. This showing a prospect what a product will do for him is spoken of as *description by use*.

*Describing the Product in Terms of Its Use.* The description by use will have a better chance if it does not attempt to do too much. The customer knows much less about a product than the average salesman. He does not want to know nor does he need to know so much. The magic wire contraption formerly sold from door to door which could be used at one time as the frame for a light-shade, at another time as a basket to hold the eggs set into a pan of hot water to cook, or as a sewing basket to contain each week's mending, or as a muzzle for a dog, or a rack to hold picture postcards, would sell more readily if the salesman would center upon one convincing reason for buying it. Sales are consummated less by variety of appeals to feeling than by intensity in feeling.

Description by use for any product varies according to many factors: the class of prospect to whom it should or may be sold, the newness of the type of product on the market, the talking points and price of competing products. Suppose, for example, the product in question is a Ford

car. The salesman will not try to use the same talking-point for the moderately wealthy man, the day laborer, and the salaried man. To the first, it is a knock-about car to be used on certain occasions when he does not wish to use his "good" car. To the second, it may be the means of transporting him to and from work, but it is also the family "Packard" on Sundays and holidays. For a salaried man, particularly a salesman, it is a necessity in his business. He may have no use for it outside of working hours. For certain classes of professional people and young people it is an expensive plaything. It is evident that one story of what benefit a Ford may be will not touch the self-interest of each class of individuals. What may be a luxury to one man may be a necessity to another; what may be a plaything to one person may be a serious matter to another. For example, the following letter about beautiful boxes for candies is aimed at the chief interest of a confectioner:

Dear Sir:

What would you think of the merchant who boarded up the windows of his store?

A foolish question, isn't it? Yet do not some merchants figuratively board up their windows by not displaying their goods to the best advantage?

But the confectioner does not do this. He chooses jealously a setting fit for the gems of his art.

The beauty of a box must make known and be in keeping with the goodness of his sweets.

We have designed the boxes which will impart that first appeal to the candy buyer, that appeal to the eye which is so heightened by the mere sight of fine candy.

BOXES OF BEAUTY for candy are like spacious windows for the merchant's wares.

Sincerely yours,

*Emphasizing the Distinguishing Features of the Product.*

If the product is new on the market, its appeal will be very different, even though the class of buyers does not change, from the appeal of later competing products. While the first vacuum cleaner may well have stressed an easier and better way of keeping homes clean, later models must find more definite points of merit. Salesmen for one vacuum cleaner now make a point of the fact that it combines the merits of the carpet sweeper, the carpet beater, and the vacuum cleaner. Salesmen for another vacuum cleaner make a point of the fact that the attachments to clean walls and upholstered furniture are free equipment.

*Using Price as a Talking Point.* Price, which is often thought of as a detail of the terms or proposition and featured in the clincher, under certain circumstances and with certain people has a large part in creating desire. General advertising for automobiles, typewriters, electric washing machines, and adding machines may make a man conscious of need, but the price relative to his monthly or weekly income may be so high as to cause him to suppress his desire until the price comes down, or his prosperity increases. When an announcement comes to him in a sales letter that he can secure one of these objects at a price within his means, his unconscious desire may become an active desire. Car, typewriter, vacuum cleaner sales have been stimulated on this basis. The price in the letter quoted in Chapter XIX to sell a general utility coat, in view of the free trial offer, helps to make desire active.

On the other hand, price becomes a talking point when it is noticeably higher than that usually paid for the same type of article. Two pairs of shoes of the same color and size pictured in a catalogue may not look unlike, though one sells for seven dollars and the other for eleven. If the higher priced pair is sold, it is because the sales description skillfully selects features of enduring good appearance and wearing qualities, which build up a value for it not apparent on the surface of things. The writer matches some feature

of the shoes, the fine workmanship for instance, against the prospect's pride.

When price is much above the standard or much below the standard for a product, it may be combined with other factors in creating desire. Always it must be accounted for in order to arouse desire effectively and allay suspicion.

### Developing the Opening Idea Properly.

*Timeliness in Mentioning the Product.* Developing the opening idea properly consists, too, in introducing the commodity or the service at the right time. The story about the commodity may have to wait until a man's needs, major and minor, have been found; until his attention has been centered upon them. Then the time is ripe for the introduction of the commodity. It is futile to mention it before. In the following letter attention is first directed toward the need. Then the product is mentioned to fill that need:

There is no health-giving inexpensive recreation like canoeing. There is no sport which is more typically an "Outdoor Sport." Canoeing can be indulged in by all ages. Every person who can use his arms is a potential paddler and every person who can sit should be a willing passenger.

We believe that living the "Outdoor Life" before the War made our boys fitter for winning the war. To follow their example should be the aspiration and aim of every American boy and girl, man, woman, and child, to the end that each and every one of us may be fit for whatever comes. "Outdoor Life" will do it, and with a low-cost, safe, red-blood-producing "OLD TOWN CANOE" you can sport like a Prince or mimic the Indian.

*Vividness in Description by Use.* Vividness in presentation is often a large factor in the appeal to interest. It comes from belief in what one is doing, from knowledge of what a product can do, from the descriptive power which

will enable a person to paint vividly what is in his own imagination. It consists in centering upon those aspects of a product that a user of the product would center upon; in creating by writing the impressions which the buyer would gain from experience in possessing and using. Analysis of the following letters illustrates how interest is developed by description by use:

### *Illustration I*

You are hardly to blame if you never before could bring yourself to relish Bran. And for good reason, since never till now has there been a ready-to-eat and also *GOOD-TO-EAT* Bran—one you felt you could really enjoy.

Post's Bran Flakes (with other parts of wheat) is made by a special process which retains with the bran other valuable parts of the wheat berry, producing a delightful food that is nutritious as well as laxative. Happily, it is non-irritating to any part of the digestive tract.

We now offer a *real bran food* so delicate and appetizing that you will be sure to add it to your list of preferred cereals once you have tasted it. It is no longer necessary to consume bran as a disagreeable duty.

### *Illustration II*

Like every other up-to-date business, yours has been built up by making use of good, new ideas—your own, or some other fellow's, perhaps, now and then. The Meilicke Price Checker is the development of a combination of such ideas. It is an efficiency device adaptable to a very wide variety of purposes.

For speedy, accurate, and almost automatic checking of catalog parts, prices, and descriptions, invoice extensions, and stock records, it has saved many of our customers literally hundreds of dollars annually. You know the reputation for efficient methods of such institutions as Montgomery Ward & Company, Sears, Roe-



buck & Company, The Wrigley Company, and Wilson & Company. They use Meilicke Price Checkers in every department handling routine work requiring constant and immediate reference to selling and cost prices, billing, sizes, and various stock data.

The need for the Price Checker is not confined to large manufacturing and jobbing concerns by any means. Its time and money saving value is probably more quickly proven in a small business. For where profits are figured on a limited capital, there is greater need to handle routine work in a speedy, accurate manner. The partial list of names of purchasers shown on circular enclosed, proves the suitability of the device for the retailer, wholesaler, or manufacturer. Any business which values a positive checking system on prices, costs, and stocks, NEEDS the Meilicke.

*Coherence in Arrangement of Ideas.* Other illustrations of creating interest by developing the opening idea properly are to be found in the typical letters quoted in Chapter XIX. In the letter selling insurance one vital interest of the reader after another is proposed: "save money for yourself"; "take your place in the business world"; "pay a definite never-failing income to your wife and children." Then the means of reaching these goals, a contract for insurance, is reiterated in the question, "Will you enter into a contract which will easily effect these things proposed?"

The vital interest in the letter selling bonds is an "Independent Income." Attention is directed to this vital interest by the command: "Decide whether or not an Independent Income is worth while." The writer assumes that an independent income is worth while; that it is already among a man's vital interests; that the mere mention of it will give the idea activity. He therefore introduces his commodity (bonds) at once, and proceeds to the vivid description of results of investment to make the relation to the reader's needs easily apparent.

Evidence that an expert has written the letter with the caption "Self-Paid Pinkertons" is the use of a figure to give

the fundamental idea: Our Blank Automatic Sprinklers detect fire, put it out, and pay for themselves. Stated thus, it is a mere commonplace; stated figuratively, it becomes vivid and arouses interest through centering attention on the figure:

If you will get the Self-Paid Pinkertons of Fire Protection to watch these sleeping fires, the insurance companies will reduce your rates enormously. The Pinkertons are sleepless, everywhere present, armed against fire—they are Blank Automatic Sprinklers.

This device of focusing attention upon a figure which not only arouses interest but leads directly to the central selling point, requires the exercise of considerable imagination. If the figure is at all apt, it gives the whole letter great driving power.

A letter selling fountain and window displays of the California Fruit Growers Association creates desire by pointing out to the reader his need for "taking full advantage of the advertising possibilities of these popular beverages" (orangeade and lemonade drinks made to order and dispensed over a fountain) in his general business; and by showing him that the window displays will satisfy his need. In pointing out the "need," the sales correspondent makes the concrete statements: "Upon fresh fruit orangeades and lemonades you can build the reputation of your whole business." "These drinks have been responsible for new business averaging better than \$1,000 a year to fountains equipped to dispense them efficiently."

Similarly, the favorable attention which is secured by the striking statement at the beginning of the following letter is converted, by skillful wording of the succeeding paragraphs, into interest in the article offered for sale (ready-made dresses in wholesale lots):

The Doctor, the Minister, and the Merchant are the three men who come nearest to knowing the community

in which they live. And the merchant, who most often sees people in their everyday surroundings, probably knows them best of all.

You make it your business to study your customers and to know what they need and want. But even knowing isn't enough. You've got to give them what they are looking for. And that's where we come in.

Just as you're in business to give your customers the merchandise they prefer, so we're here to supply you with the goods you must have.

If you'll tell us definitely what you require, we'll send you out dresses so well adapted to your needs that you'll be tempted to think they were produced especially for you.

Enclosures, illustrations on the letter, or pictures in the inside of a four-page folder must not be overlooked as means of creating desire. Photographs of products in use are often more vivid than skillfully written words. Yet it is to be remembered that physical appearance of an article is only a part of the description. It must be presented to appeal to the emotions. Sometimes the product may be described as if it possessed human traits. This description may be presented by means of a vivid analogy, such as is used in the following letter:

If Mr. Jones of the Blank Company were to come into your office, present his card, then remain dumb, he would certainly fail to get your business.

By the same sign does your advertising material fail when it cannot raise a voice to its readers. In fact your advertising must be even more eloquent than your salesmen; it must speak even tho speechless; it must display the personality of your company on the flat surface of paper.

The salesman's card without his talk is worthless, so is the advertisement which doesn't hit.

Our business is to make your advertising matter actually worth more than the money you put into it, and we can do it without spending a fortune. We compile catalogs, get out circulars, mailing folders, form letters, and broadsides, as well as write magazine and newspaper advertisements.

To make this description mean most to the prospect, it must be written to fit the user's point of view. The telephone which is to its manufacturer innumerable parts made of a variety of materials, with utmost care and precision, is to the user an instrument of convenience. The user wants his call completed easily and his message heard distinctly. The salesman who talks of the number of knots tied per square foot in his mattress will usually create less desire than the salesman who draws to the prospect's imagination a picture of comfort.

Yet there is sometimes something to be gained in describing the process by which an article is produced. For example, The Bell Telephone Company's advertisements in magazines have featured the unusual conditions under which men work all over the world to secure the materials required for the manufacture of a receiver and a transmitter. Evidence of care and skill in the preparation and assembling of parts arouses people's interest and builds up a sense of the value of the finished product. When the Ford Motor Company announces that a certain type of conveyors will be installed in its factories, so that parts for cars can be handled more efficiently, many people infer that the Ford car will therefore be a still better buy for the money.

**Building Value Into the Product.**—In the following letter, details of the materials used in the making of pencils are presented in a way to develop interest and focus that interest upon a particular brand of pencils:

What is it you use every day of your life?

Pencils!

Yes, that's the thing—pencils! The magic little sticks that faithfully record at will any thought or fact you wish to remember!

The wood, fragrant from the cedar forests, and carefully selected and seasoned; the graphite scientifically mixed with clay; the glue in huge steam vats; the gay colored paints, sprayed on in minute globules; the metal bands, brought up from the very bowels of the earth; and the rubber from many thousand miles away—they all go into the manufacture of the humble little pencil. And why is all this care taken? For the simple reason that man must convey messages.

And because man must write, the Velvet Pencil Co. has placed at his disposal a pencil whose writing qualities are as smooth as its very name. The Velvet is made right; it is made for persons who demand the very best, at fair prices.

As a usual thing, a salesman can build value for a product by skillfully selecting and presenting descriptive details for it. One authority tells a story about a hammer which sold faster when featured in the catalogue of a Chicago mail-order house because of the wealth of details about its materials and construction, than it had sold over the counter with real "flesh and blood" salesmen to sell it. He concludes this story with the following tribute: "I will take my hat off to a company five hundred miles away that can make me see a hammer clearer, and build up the value in my mind better by printing ink and by cut, than I could by actually seeing that hammer with my real eyes in a store."

## CHAPTER XXI

### SALES PRESENTATION (CONTINUED)

#### I. PART ONE—CONVICTION

- A. Definition of Conviction.
- B. Relation of Conviction and Desire
- C. Impressive Evidence
  - 1. *Facts*
  - 2. *Tests*
  - 3. *Samples*
  - 4. *Testimonials*
- D. Judicious use of Evidence
  - 1. *Selecting Essential Data*
  - 2. *Organizing the Evidence*
  - 3. *Making Logical Deductions*
- E. Skillful Presentation of Evidence
  - 1. *Specific Statements*
  - 2. *Conservative Statements*
  - 3. *Dramatic Statements*
  - 4. *Confident Statements*

#### II. PART TWO—ACTION

- A. Definition of the Clincher
- B. Timing the Clincher
- C. Adapting the Clincher to the Prospect
- D. Adapting the Clincher to the Product
- E. Elements of the Clincher
  - 1. *Summarizing the Selling Appeal*
  - 2. *Smoothing the Way for Action*
  - 3. *Supplying the Stimulus to Action*



## PART ONE—CONVICTION

Between desire and conviction there can be no definite boundary line; yet in their nature and functions they are different enough to demand separate attention and study. Desire is to some people sufficient reason for buying whatever they want and have the money to pay for. Much of their money goes for luxuries in food, in clothing, and in pleasure-cars, while more rational people content themselves with plainer food, clothes, and cars. To other people desire is far from sufficient reason for buying; for them it is one thing to want something, and another thing to think that they can afford it. They consciously reject whatever appeals to feeling only. Each person's absorbing interest, or dominant ambition, whether it be wealth, education, social position, or what not, determines what appeals to his feeling and what appeals to his judgment.

**Definition.**—Conviction is that part of the sales presentation that makes the prospect believe he will make no mistake in buying. It is a state of mind brought about by logical processes supporting and heightening his enthusiasm for the product.

**Relation of Conviction and Desire.**—One and the same detail may make a man desire something and convince him that he should have it. The price of the article may make him want it and at the same time convince him that he can afford to buy it. The fact that other people, like him, are buying may make him desire an article and convince him that he is making no mistake to buy it. Conviction begins in desire because men find it easy to believe what they wish to believe. The first step to conviction is, then, to make them willing to believe.

Talking points for products should not only create desire but also supply evidence which will justify the fulfilling of desire. They should show the reader that he *ought* to buy, the word *ought* meaning not only that he needs the product, but also that he can afford it. If not fully convinced, he

will not make the requisite effort to possess it. Consequently the sale will be lost.

If there were no loose relation between feeling and reason, there would be no need of getting on common emotional ground with a customer, nor would the personal element enter into salesmanship to so great an extent as it does. Emotional appeal may be interwoven skillfully throughout the presentation of the evidence. Many men buy furniture, or office appliances, not only to increase profits but also to satisfy their pride. Conviction, then, must aim both at heightening a man's feeling of need or desire and supplying impressive evidence that it is wise to act upon this feeling.

**Impressive Evidence.**—Evidence, which is the material of conviction, can reach its maximum efficiency only when it is centered on proving that the product will solve one single definite and realized problem and that it is worth the price. No man wants a cure that is worse than the disease.

When once the sales correspondent fully understands what manner of man he is addressing and knows definitely what must be proved in order to get his man to act, the success of the letter in heightening the reader's enthusiasm and satisfying his reason will depend upon:

1. Impressive evidence.
2. Judicious use of evidence.
3. Skillful presentation.

*Facts.* The potential power of an impressive fact is not fully appreciated by sales correspondents. If it were, there would be more facts used to support talking points in letters. In the following example, which makes some interesting assertions, there is not one tangible bit of evidence.

Meet FLORA WAX!

When those dangerous disease germs on your floors see FLORA WAX coming, they make a grab for their gasmasks and dive for their bomb-proof cells down into cracks and crevices, or into the pores of the wood.

But FLORA gets them just the same!

The first paragraph above may be more or less a flight of imagination, but that FLORA WAX gets them is cold fact, naked truth.

You know it. You also know, I think, that there isn't another floor-sweep made that combines the germicidal properties of FLORA WAX with its cleaning qualities.

FLORA is in a class by herself, and we are KEEP-ING her there, although I'll admit it is mighty hard these days to get an ample supply of the high-grade mineral materials that go into the making of such an efficient floor-sweep.

Don't you have a job for FLORA? Her employment card is attached. She is yours to command.

Yours truly,

The following letter is more convincing than the one above because the sales correspondent has prepared definite facts to support his statements.

Dear Customer:

Funny things happen—look at these figures:

|                     |      |                        |
|---------------------|------|------------------------|
| Raw cotton is today | 185% | above the low of 19... |
| Denims are          | 100% | " " " " "              |
| Overalls are only   | 38%  | " " " " "              |

|                    |        |                        |
|--------------------|--------|------------------------|
| Raw cotton is      | 2¢     | higher than a year ago |
| Denims are         | 2¢     | lower " " " "          |
| While Overalls are | \$1.50 | " " " " "              |

Cotton (a farm product by the way) is comparatively higher than the finished products—*overalls are actually cheaper by \$1.50 per dozen, while cotton is 2¢ higher than last year.*

Doesn't this mean:

1—That our profits must be pretty well squeezed out of denims and overalls?

- 2—That very little danger can be connected with purchases of work clothing?
- 3—That it is good business to buy against actual requirements NOW?

At any rate, spring has come in a gallop, farmers are buzzing about their fields, and the best overall and work-shirt season is just ahead.

Our latest price list and order blanks are enclosed.

We shall give your orders prompt attention—let 'em come.

Very truly yours,

P.S. If you are up against serious competition in prices rather than quality, let us send you samples of our Blank overalls and work-shirts—garments of good wearing qualities at an attractive price.

The belief that figures do not lie gives adequate grounds for their employment as evidence. They have the merit of being definite and furnishing a basis for calculation. Supplemented by details of the purpose for which the figures were compiled, how they were secured, etc., they are usually convincing. The sales letter for oversize-dresses (quoted in Chapter XIX), depends much upon the fact that 37% of women in towns are "stouts." The letter selling overalls makes effective use of statistics on market prices of cotton, etc. Letters selling securities rely almost entirely upon the use of financial statements and other mathematical data to gain conviction.

*Tests.* Records of endurance tests are often very impressive evidence. The value of a test in gaining conviction, as well as the advantage of specific statements over general statements, is brought out by the contrast between the following paragraphs. Both examples deal with the same product.

*Illustration I*

## General Statements:

Cravanette Processed Boys' Clothes, of which we are the exclusive manufacturers, have attained popularity because they are shower-proof, and they are extensively sold and featured by the leading merchants in the country. But now consider how much more widely they will be sold when mothers know that they will wear twice as long as any other Boys' Clothing. Think of what such a line will mean to your Boys' Department.

*Illustration II*

## Specific Statements:

Our Research Department made a comparative test of the wearing qualities of two pieces of the same cloth, one treated with the improved "Cravanette" Process and the other untreated. The test consisted of rubbing these samples with a glass rod that had been roughened at the end to give it a surface similar to emery paper. This rod was attached to an electric motor and revolved at the rate of 300 revolutions per minute. This test reproduced as nearly as possible the friction which a suit would meet when coming in contact with the pavement.

Here are the startling results:

The untreated example was worn through in 15 minutes. The "Cravanette" Processed sample showed no signs of a hole after being tested for 4½ hours.

In other words, "Cravanette" Processed suitings have wearing properties that are many hundred per cent greater than untreated fabrics.

*Samples.* Samples are impressive evidence, but they must be capitalized in the letter. The Star Shirt Manufacturing Company made good use of 5 x 8" samples of shirting by printing on them the following letter:

Dear Sir:

This letter is typed on

O Y A  
R L  
zephyr

our own exclusive—trademark registered—fabric. It looks like silk—feels like linen—and will wear till the cows come home. White—Tan—Blue—Pink and Helio are the colors. Shirts can be retailed at Five Dollars. Pajamas at Seven Dollars. Delivery after December First.

Hitch your wagon to this particular STAR.

Yours very truly,

When the American Multigraph Sales Company desired to convince people that their multigraphed work had every appearance of a separately written letter, they sent their own multigraphed sales letter for concrete evidence, and called attention to the specific, salient details as follows:

That the Multigraph can materially reduce the cost of your printed matter is proved by its consistent saving of from 25c to 75c of every dollar its users formerly spent for printing.

From the form letter standpoint alone, let this you are now reading serve as an example. The letterhead was printed from an electrotype on the Multigraph; the letter itself was printed from Multigraph type through a ribbon on the Multigraph; the fill-in at the top was done on a typewriter, and the signature at the bottom was imprinted, by means of the signature device, at the same time the letter itself was being run.

*Testimonials.* Testimonial evidence, the impressiveness of which has been somewhat impaired by unscrupulous advertising of patent medicines and by unwise solicitation,



still has merit because an ounce of personal experience is more convincing than a ton of persuasion. Unsolicited testimonials from men of undoubted integrity are as potent as they ever were.

Sales correspondents have been able to gain belief by substitutes for testimonial evidence. The slogan for the Packard car, "ASK THE MAN WHO OWNS ONE," creates the confidence that personal testimony creates. Correspondents answering inquiries on Franklin cars do not say, "John Doe's letter is reproduced here to prove to you that Franklin cars satisfy." Instead, they gain the result of testimonial evidence by the suggestion: "If you have not already done so, count the satisfied owners in your locality." To make the point that few Franklin owners find it necessary to carry extra tire equipment, they simply raise the question: "How many Franklin owners have you noticed who carry an extra tire?"

The following letter develops interest in the testimonial narrative supplied in an enclosed leaflet, and goes far toward winning conviction by summarizing the case in a way to show how closely analogous it is to the problem confronting the reader.

**Attention Chief Engineer.**

Dear Sir:

How many times this year have *you* taken boilers off the line for cleaning?

The Chief Engineer of a power plant in Kansas only takes his off the line for inspection; he hasn't had a bit of scale in his boilers for more than three years. Considering that his make-up feed water contains 33 grains of hardness per gallon, you'll admit that this is a good record.

Yet, after he found the way to do it, the elimination of scale was a simple matter.

His own story of how he found and got rid of the cause of the scale is so interesting that we've printed it in leaflet form. It tells how he went about solving his difficulty, how with one move he did away with scale, cut down repairs and replacements, and gets more steam from every ton of coal he burns.

A copy of his letter is attached. Read it. There may be an idea in it that will simplify things in your own boiler room.

Cordially yours,

P.S. There's a post card attached to this letter, to make it easier for you to get the useful booklet, "Reducing Fuel and Boiler Plant Operating Costs." Fill out the card and mail it today.

If personal testimonials are used, they should always be complete quotations of statements personally signed; for the name, title, and address of the writer are large factors in their impressiveness. Furthermore, the expression endorsing the product must be forceful and pointed; otherwise there is danger that the testimonial will "damn with faint praise." Finally, no personal testimonial is effective if it does not present a close analogy to the prospect's case. It must make him see himself in the place of the satisfied user, and convince him that no difference of circumstances would prevent his own satisfaction.

A sales letter often relies on enclosures to convince the prospect of the product's worth. These aids need to be properly introduced, so that the impressions they make will be capitalized. Exhibits in the way of charts, photographs, and cartoons appeal to sight; samples of materials appeal to touch as well as to sight; and small packages of candies and talcum powders appeal also to other senses. Just as the letter may rightfully direct attention to these things, so may it do well to tell the reader what to look for in enclosed literature. The following paragraph acts thus as an ambassador for a rather technical booklet:

The booklet tells why puny, skimpy, undersize, underweight construction causes 90% of all engine troubles; causes 70% of all engines to go to the scrap heap before they are five years old. Then it tells how our engineers build Blank Engines 15% to 55% *oversize*, to defeat these engine troubles and stop this terrible engine death-rate.

### Judicious Use of Evidence.

*Selecting Essential Data.* The sales correspondent has to run the whole gamut of belief-making material: expert testimony, experience, reasoning, balancing, arguments, good analogy, and generalization to decide which makes the best contact with his reader, which best expresses his product. Judicious use of the materials does not mean *much* data, but *essential* data. This is largely a question of knowing the reader and taking into consideration the fact that the strongest conviction rests upon both reason and emotion. The problem of the sales correspondent is, then, to take the material of evidence and use it in such a way as to give it the greatest efficiency.

*Organizing the Evidence.* Judicious use is made of evidence by centering on one dominant idea, by presenting an abundance of well selected facts to support this one idea, and by taking account of the natural feeling accompanying this idea. Judicious use of evidence is demanded by the "terrible sanity of the average man." He will pass by all the "radiant moonshine" in seeking the solid and meaningful fact. In the following letter one looks in vain for the definite talking point about the product offered:

Gentlemen:

We are equipped to render you service of the highest character. Our refinery connections throughout the various oilfields are such that we can assure you of furnishing Fuel or Gas oils of uniform quality and the grade most suitable for your purpose.

We are at all times prepared to make prompt shipments, to make shipments as specified by yourselves

over any period you may desire or to furnish cars en-route when necessary.

**BLANK SERVICE**—a complete Fuel Oil service that will meet the requirements of your most exacting needs—is worthy of your most careful consideration. We invite you to profit by the use of our facilities.

Yours very truly,

By way of contrast, the following letter shows how a mass of facts made impressive by a table of figures may be organized to support the central selling point:

### THE FUEL EXPERT SAYS:

Users of coal for producing steam as well as for radiation purposes are learning by practical tests the economy of using coals with high carbon heat units and low ash and moisture.

Ash is a resultant and produces no heat, and the moisture in coal must be heated, converted into steam, and driven off, resulting in a heat loss.

The relative values in heat units, ash, and moisture of various coals, are shown below:

|                    | Moisture | Ash   | Heat Units | Value | Per Ton |
|--------------------|----------|-------|------------|-------|---------|
| Blue Ridge         |          |       |            |       |         |
| Mine No. 1         | 3.68     | 4.18  | 13435      | 100%  | \$10.00 |
| Hocking Valley     | 5.35     | 7.88  | 12826      | 95.4  | 9.54    |
| Franklin Illinois  | 7.56     | 8.62  | 12142      | 90.4  | 9.04    |
| Black Gem Illinois | 8.30     | 9.26  | 11990      | 89.2  | 8.92    |
| Central District   | 16.04    | 13.77 | 9940       | 74.7  | 7.47    |
| Danville District  | 18.20    | 16.28 | 8210       | 61.1  | 6.11    |

The last column indicates in terms of heat value, the actual value of other coals based on Blue Ridge at \$10.00 a ton.

Based on heat units there is a difference of almost \$1.00 in heat value between the two extremes as shown by the table.

We are here to serve you. "Ask Bob." Main 438.

Very truly yours,

*Making Logical Deductions.* Without attempting to put evidence in syllogistic form, because the tone of debate or the atmosphere of the court would defeat the purposes of a sales letter, the writer needs to pay careful attention to the logic of his reasoning. Illogical reasoning is much more apparent in written than in oral salesmanship because the reader may sit and think about the argument and analyze its fallacies. The successful letter is so clear and logical that the reader does not have to turn over in his mind various statements to judge their truth and falsity. He should see at once that the conclusions are properly deduced. One doubtful inference or one instance of apparently illogical reasoning undermines his confidence in other parts of the letter.

The need for rigorous logic is all the greater if there is any uncertain factor in the proposition. Letters inviting speculation in oil companies, for example, are often shot through and through with doubtful inferences from precarious premises. The following is a fair example:

Friend Stockholder:

.....

Just what the conditions are in this new pool southeast of Blank is shown by the following letter from your Mr. Rugg:

"I am simply bubbling over with the possibilities of the new Blank Pool. It is going to be a real 'Boom.' It is already under way. At least 25 new rigs are up now between us and the Huff Pool on the hill southeast. Leases are going higher all the time, and on the group south of us, they are bringing in wells right along, and there are at least fifteen new wells now drilling.

"We can't miss it. The more I go over the lease and check up the surrounding country, the better our lease looks. It is the one big opportunity for us to make a

real thing for our company, our one big opportunity to take back what we have all put in the company.” (Note: The “Huff Pool” Mr. Rugg refers to is 2 miles southeast of “our” lease; the group south of us is just one mile distant.)

.....

It's just a question now of going forward or backward. Going backward with us will mean giving up and quitting and eventually losing all we have put in; going forward, buying and drilling this lease, will, I am firmly convinced, mean the bringing in of a good well the first shot, mean our money back with 25% cash bonus and 8% interest on top of that, plus our stock bonus, and, what is still more important, the permanent success of our company, making valuable the stock we already own.

.....

Yours for success,

### Skillful Presentation of Evidence.

*Specific Statements.* Vague generalization is the most common weakness of sales-letter writing. Few correspondents appreciate the power of the specific, concrete, and imaginative statement. It is always superior to the general, abstract, and unimaginative statement. The “purest soap” is not so believable as “99.44% pure.” The “richest milk in the world” is not so believable as “5½ percent of butter fat.” Although a “smooth, glassy finish” is advertised to be the distinguishing feature of Old Town Canoes, the feature which makes them rugged and durable, that statement does not mean much until it is supported by details of the material used, the method of surfacing, as in the following paragraphs:

Dear Sir:

.....

We use a very heavy stout one-piece canvas like Sample No. 8 enclosed. Canvas like this is on all “OLD



TOWN CANOES" except the "Guide's Special" and "50 lb. Model." You have probably known canoes that were torn on the first snag they struck. This is because the manufacturer used thinner canvas (No. 9, No. 10 and lighter). This saved the manufacturer fifty cents to a dollar.

It would be possible to make a further saving with a doubtful low-cost filler. "OLD TOWN CANOE" filler is of our own formula and is rubbed deeply into heavy tough canvas. The smooth glass-like surface is obtained by diligent sandpapering. Excess of filler—an easy way to cover up the canvas for a smooth finish without sandpapering—is never allowed. This excess would promise checks, cracks, and leaks after only a little use. Of course over the filler are put the many coats of paint, color, and varnish, which produce the final enamel surface which wears like iron. The complete finish looks for all the world like one piece of beautiful smooth enamel.

.....

Yours truly,

*Conservative Statements.* A conservative statement is usually more convincing than an exaggerated statement. Shakespeare's line, "Methinks he doth protest too much," calls attention to the natural human trait of doubting whatever is too loudly proclaimed. Strong statements require strong proof, and the absence of proof is more noticeable in an exaggerated claim than in a moderate claim. No intelligent person will be favorably impressed by such superlative expressions as characterize the following letter:

Dear Friend:

You could hardly realize the intense excitement of the people dashing to our sale, but everybody was well repaid for their efforts. Footwear for Men, Women, and Children, of supreme quality is now being sacrificed at unbelievable prices.

That is the reason we sold thousands of dollars' worth of shoes the first week of this sale, but beginning tomorrow, the last week of this sale, another vast array of values will be prepared throughout this store. This is the most unusual and extraordinary shoe-value giving event this store has ever inaugurated to supply its customers' needs, as we are going to have our store remodeled and must reduce our stock to make room for the workmen.

It is common knowledge that we specialize in buying none but the very best shoes and most exclusive patterns, for the class of patronage to which we cater is not interested in commonplace merchandise; so in a majority of cases our fine footwear is not handled by any other stores in this district.

After careful deliberation, we have decided it would be better to mark prices down to an extremely low point and even take a real loss to accomplish our purpose, rather than make a small sacrifice of profits and only have a halfhearted success of our sale. We have made every effort to make prices so attractive that they will mean a real benefit to your purse and a genuine Saving of Dollars to many old customers and the host of new friends we hope to make—yourself included.

We shall be very glad to have you attend this sale and can assure you the most courteous treatment and consideration, whether you buy or not.

Always yours faithfully,

*Dramatic Statements.* Children and uneducated people accept an idea most readily if the presentation is dramatized. Figures of speech, especially simile, metaphor, and analogy, have great persuasive power and may often be used to advantage in sales letters. The FLORA WAX letter quoted earlier in this chapter relies almost entirely upon the vivid personification of the product; with some readers it will carry its point although no supporting evidence is given. Similarly, any apt figure of speech is an aid

to convincing presentation of evidence. Abraham Lincoln's reply to those who urged him to change generals during the war—"Don't swap horses while crossing a stream,"—is a splendid example of how to meet objections. Assent to a proposition can often be won more logically by the use of a parallel case, actual or hypothetical. The letter on getting rid of scale in boilers (quoted earlier in this chapter) is an example of an actual parallel case. The letter about "BOXES OF BEAUTY" and the letter beginning—"If Mr. Jones of the Blank Company were to come into your office, present his card, then remain dumb, he would certainly fail to get your business."—both quoted in Chapter XX, are examples of hypothetical cases.

*Confident Statements.* The sales correspondent cannot depend upon unusual devices for gaining conviction, but rather upon the sincerity of the tone of the whole letter, the vigor and snap of sentences growing out of the sureness of his facts. A man who has confidence in himself and his product will have little difficulty in winning the confidence of his reader. The following letter has the tone of naturalness and simplicity of the personal salesman who knows his goods and keeps his balance.

Gentlemen:

I understand you are going to wash your factory windows in the near future.

I am offering you an opportunity of doing it at a lower cost and quicker than you have ever done this work.

I am willing to ship you any of our standard containers of either my powder or liquid Ever Glow Glass Cleaner with the understanding that you use it—if you don't like it, you return it to me and I will credit your account in full.

You simply can't lose—neither can I as I know the satisfaction this material will give you.

How much shall I ship you on this basis?

The powder is for plain transparent glass—the liquid for corrugated and factory glass or skylights.

Yours very truly,

P.S. Just jot your memo order down here.

Finally, most letters gain conviction not by means of any one element alone, but by the proper combination of elements, as in the following example:

Dear Sir:

Every unnecessary motion in your business costs you actual money—a part of your profits. That's obvious, of course.

But you may say, "Where is that lost motion?"

How about your system for your credit accounts, with its unproductive recopying of records?

You lose real, tangible dollars every day when you, or your clerks, recopy orders, bills, or statements.

All this useless labor can be eliminated and your system made even more accurate—your charge accounts protected—by a McCaskey System of Accounts.

The recopying of a credit item takes no longer than making a cash sale.

Every time a customer wishes to make payment, any clerk can give the down-to-the-minute amount due, give a receipt for the payment, record the balance still due, and make all records of the transaction—with "One Writing" in the fraction of a minute.

Customers never question the accuracy of your statements if you use a McCaskey System of Accounts. They have full details of every payment on account.

You can save money by reading the enclosed folder and acting upon its recommendation.

And we don't know anyone who doesn't want to save money.

Do you?

Yours very truly,

Such a letter is convincing because it is logically and judiciously and skillfully built up on facts. Though it looks simple and artless, such a letter is usually the result of unstinting pains in collecting and organizing ideas and in selecting words, all to the end of winning the reader's instant and unquestioning assent.

#### PART TWO.—ACTION

**Definition of the Clincher.**—Deciding to buy does not always mean buying. Something is needed to carry decision into action. In a sales letter, the part that gets action is known by various names, but is most widely known as the clincher. It is the consummation of the sales presentation. All the money, time, and effort expended in getting attention, creating interest and conviction are in vain if the prospect takes no action toward buying; that is, if the clincher fails. It matters little, so far as the profits of a business are concerned, whether a prospect reads a letter all the way through or stops at the first sentence, if he takes no favorable action on the matter.

**Timing the Clincher.**—The clincher is the spurt at the finish of the race. It must be well-timed. Here is the chief difference between closing an order in a personal sale and closing it by mail: While the personal salesman may detect the moment when the customer makes a mental decision to buy, and may then produce an order blank, saying "Just write your name here"; the writer of a salesletter has to depend on general experience and imagination as guides to

determine the right time to suggest action after he has brought the reader's desire to white-heat and has won his willingness to buy. Similarly, the personal salesman can, by watching his man, judge whether inviting action, urging action, or holding back is the best means of closing the sale, but the sales correspondent must rely upon considerations of the prospect's character, taste, and temperament, to grade the intensity of his effort to the degree of interest which the letter will develop. Probably as many sales are lost by attempting to get an order *too soon* or *too late* as by failing to make any definite attempt to close the order at all.

The necessity for clinchers arises from the fact that prospects delay buying. The reason for delay are many and deep. To devise an effective close for a sales letter, it is necessary to make a sound diagnosis of these reasons.

**Adapting the Clincher to the Prospect.**—The customer may be of the class of people who have difficulty in making up their minds; he may be a victim of inertia and laziness; he may delay because there are too many obstacles to ordering; he may not know where to send his order; just what form his order should take; how to make payment. Even if he knows all this, he may delay because of the effort it takes to get a money order, or because of the inconvenience or danger involved in sending coin or currency or a check through the mail.

Often the prospect delays buying for financial reasons. The salesman's diagnosis should, therefore, include all the circumstances of his customer's income, social position, education, and temperament. As a concrete illustration of how largely finance enters into the question of devising the terms of a clincher, a salesman who sold portable typewriters to students found that his orders more than doubled as soon as he adopted the inducement of a partial payment plan. Students who never had forty-five dollars at one time could buy by paying five dollars a month. The fact that houses, cars, furniture, bonds, clothes, and books are sold on a partial payment plan shows how definitely terms facilitate the



change from want to buy and ought to buy, to actual buying.

**Adapting the Clincher to the Product.**—The diagnosis of why a person delays buying, with a view to finding a remedy, should include a consideration of the nature of the product. Many a sale is lost through over-insistence in the clincher. If the product is insurance or something else in which a large amount of money is involved, or the payments extend through a long period, it is undesirable to employ what is known as *high-pressure* in making the close. Insurance salesmen generally do not rush a prospect to sign up, except in the period immediately preceding his birthday when rates relative to age increase. Similarly, any professional service would be cheapened by the methods used to close the sale of a suit of clothes or a piece of furniture. Too urgent persuasion in selling something bought for use through a long period of years, oriental rugs for instance, for which there are opportunities for more sales yearly, often results in increasing the buyer's resistance. To be most efficient, a clincher should be brief and of an intensity suited to the nature of the product. If employed at the point of least resistance, it need not be of very high voltage to get the order.

In the following letter, the clincher is not only well timed, short and pointed, but also skillfully designed to stimulate action without encountering obstacles.

Prospect's Name  
Prospect's Address

Dear Sir:                    "DECEIT"

A fault not to be desired, except in this instance.  
THAT you will agree, when you have finished reading  
this letter.

Examine the type closely; notice the fill-in; signature;  
general make-up. Doesn't it look like a typewritten  
letter?

Well it's not,—it's only one of the many that were run off—by the BLANK PROCESS. Does this interest you?

Let's say you have one message to deliver to 500 or 50,000 people. You want each man to know that you are presenting a proposition to HIM—If you had only him as a prospect, you would probably call in your stenographer, dictate a letter and let it go at that. However,——

You think the same proposition should appeal to 49,999 others,—But the thought of a form letter lessens your confidence in the results obtainable. How absurd to presume that 50,000 properly processed, would not bring as good results comparatively as your dictated letter. It's the same thing—if done by the BLANK PROCESS. And——

Do you know that BLANK PROCESS LETTERS cost no more than ordinary form letter work—in many instances, a good deal less?

Your signature on the enclosed card or a ring on the phone will bring one of our representatives in short order.

Yours very truly,

**Elements of a Clincher.**—To succeed in the face of the reader's tendency to delay, a clincher should sum up the argument in favor of the product, smooth the way for action, and supply the right stimulus to get immediate action.

*Summarizing the Central Selling Appeal.* Recurring to the central selling appeal is a means of intensifying desire and of maintaining conviction. The central selling appeal should be presented in one brief but vigorous statement. It should be specific, positive, and fresh. Volition depends much upon the consciousness of value to be gained by action; hence the necessity for vivid phrasing of the central appeal in the clincher to show forcefully how the reader's future

depends upon his present action. It requires the striking phrases characterizing the headlines of advertisements.

Examples of Clinchers Summarizing the Central Selling Point:

1. Illustration of succinct phrasing of central selling joint (underlined):

Blank tires, in the six years we have handled them, have proved the economy of quality. Their cost per Tire Mile will consistently beat that of any low priced casing.

2. Illustration of specific statement of the central selling point:

Wouldn't you like to test—in your own plant—a small motor that will deliver a starting torque of 400 to 600 per cent of full load and a maximum pull-up torque of from 200 to 225 per cent of full load—and do it even under unfavorable voltage conditions?

Your O.K. on this letter will bring the motor and a man to install it.

3. Illustration of positive quality in central selling point:

While the initial cost will be greater than the cost of letterheads not steel engraved, the ultimate results in additional orders and more customers will many times offset the original cost, making the steel die engraved letterheads cheaper in the end.

May we prove it?

4. Example of fresh phrasing:

Don't wait—come in now while the picking's good.

## 5. Example of emphatic phrasing:

I am sure that if you will consider the excellent quality of our merchandise, the quick service on shipments, and the low price, you will send us your order by return mail.

*Smoothing the Way for Action.* Smoothing the way is largely a matter of making steps clear, making them easy, making them natural and of overcoming a man's natural reluctance to part with his money. Since the great point is to get immediate action from a letter, one cannot allow any doubt as to what to do, or any negative suggestion that may inhibit action.

To make the steps clear, it is necessary to tell the reader very definitely where he may make his purchase, what details he should include in his order, how he shall make payment, and how he will receive the goods. The following clinchers give these details:

*Illustration I*

Remember there is no obligation attached. The order card is merely a chance for the course to sell itself to you. There is no obligation to keep it until you have tried it out for a week in your own home and are satisfied. Could anything be fairer than this?

*Illustration II*

Simply insert a 25¢ coin in the convenient mailing card. Enclose it in the addressed envelope and drop it in the mail. Do it now, you have no time to waste.

Specific directions as to just what action a customer should take do more than smooth the way. They also have the power of suggestion. Reading these directions, the reader takes, in imagination, the steps outlined for him. In imagination, he projects himself into the future and sees

the necessity of taking the present steps that lead to future realization. Specific details increase greatly the chances that a reader will respond favorably to the appeal. In fact, any vivid idea of action is by nature so dynamic that a customer is certain to act upon it unless there is a stronger counter-impulse, or inhibition.

Making action easy means supplying the customer with appropriate aids, such as order blanks, return cards, and addressed envelopes. The sales correspondent will realize what this means if he can look into a farm home where the only desk is the dining room table, the only stationery a lined copy book used by the school children, and the only writing tool a pencil; or if he can look into a town home where stamps, fountain pen, and business stationery are seldom immediately available. The clincher of a letter designed to get orders by mail should, therefore, take advantage of such devices as the following:

1. A postal card is inclosed on which is printed an order for merchandise samples or booklets, with a line for the customer's signature to complete the order.
2. The customer is invited to put his O. K. on the sales letter and sign his name thus authorizing the seller to send a representative, to ship merchandise, to send tests or samples.
3. The lower part of a letter sheet is made into an order-form with blanks for the reader to fill with appropriate details, including date and signature.
4. On the reverse side of the letter sheet is printed an order-form with the usual blanks for the details of the order, dates, and signature.

To make ordering easy there must be some convenient way for making payment. Where a customer has no credit arrangement with a house, he may pay by draft, by certified check, or by money order. Paying by drafts, or by money orders puts the customer to the inconvenience of going to a bank or to a post office. For this reason the customer is

often advised to send no money until after he has received his merchandise and has assured himself that it is worth the trouble of making the remittance. When the amount involved in a purchase is a dollar or less, the customer is usually requested at the seller's risk to enclose a dollar bill or use an enclosed coin card.

Making it the *natural* thing to send an order is accomplished by the phrasing of the directions. The word "sign" has the connotation of legal contract and seems to be fraught with serious responsibility; consequently the salesman will use the word "write." The action may be requested in a casual manner. For example, a letter for the *Herald Examiner* closes with the suggestion: "Try 5 copies for a few weeks. Just jot down on the bottom of this letter the number of papers you are willing to try. A stamped envelope is enclosed to make it handy for you to mail."

The success of the natural, casual ending depends, of course, upon the manner of performing the preliminary steps. In the following letter, which is just a clincher developed to an unusual length, the writer makes the way so clear, so easy, and so natural that the customer will surely send the order unless very serious reasons interfere.

Customer's Name  
Customer's Address

Gentlemen:

If our representative instead of this letter should come in to your place of business and should show you an order all made out and should say to you—"I have been calling upon you for years. I know your requirements. This is the order I believe will take care of your business for the present,"—wouldn't you listen to his suggestion?

We have made out the attached order after a study of the orders you have placed with us in the past. You will notice the order is a comparatively small one, but it is just big enough to give you some special quantity prices.



We want you to secure our very lowest prices, and we want you to have a stock of our products on hand best adapted to your particular trade. You can change this order as you see fit. If you reduce the quantity, the prices will advance according to the price list attached. If you increase the quantity by adding 25 rolls, the price will be reduced somewhat.

Your profits are those you make through judicious buying. It is just as much to our interest as it is to yours that you buy judiciously. Therefore, we are suggesting the attached order. All you have to do is to sign it, change it if you see fit, and return it to us.

Yours very truly,

Similarly, the final letter in a series, or the letter at the end of a sales campaign, performs the functions of a clincher. It sums up the arguments of the preceding letters, prepares the way for the prospect to act on the proposition, and urges him to act without delay. It can usually be made more personal than the earlier letters in the campaign. The following example shows how informal, intimate, and important such a letter may be and still not give offence.

University of Illinois,  
Urbana, Illinois.

Re: Dormitory  
Building.

Gentlemen:

If we knew as much about writing sales letters as we do about designing and manufacturing Hauserman Hollow-Steel Standard-Unit Partitions, we would be at work right now getting our estimates ready for furnishing and erecting complete the partitions in your new building.

On the other hand, if Hauserman Hollow-Steel Standard-Unit Partitions with their "Flexibility Plus Durability," cost you more than wood partitions, we would expect you to weigh carefully the advantages of

Hauserman along with the added cost. But when you can get these advantages without paying any more for them than for wood, "blamed" if I can understand why we have not heard from you, telling us your requirements.

Is it because we don't know how to tell you in a letter how much more we can offer you than other partition manufacturers? If it is, you'll overlook our lack of sales ability when you receive our low price for erecting your partitions complete.

Won't you submit to us at once a sketch of your partition requirements? We'll show you some speedy service in getting the estimate back to you.

Very truly yours,

*Supplying the Stimulus to Action.* The stimulus to act may be some special inducement which is to the customer's advantage, or it may be merely a suggestion of action. The device of giving the customer some inducement for ordering within a certain time, although very old and often misused, is still effective if it offers a real advantage. Merchandise may be quoted at a discount until a certain date. A premium may be offered for buying a combination of articles, or the combination price may be a little lower than the total of the separate prices. A book may be given with an order for a magazine, or two magazines offered for the regular subscription price of one, or a magazine rack furnished free. A writing set will accompany a desk. All such special inducements, if governed by a time limit, tend to stimulate immediate action.

The power of suggestion is similarly employed, and it is effective if the way has been definitely prepared for it. This suggestion of action is like the accelerator of the automobile: it depends upon the car being already in motion. If the letter has put the reader's mind in motion and developed enough momentum, very little additional pressure is needed to make the final spurt. Sales correspondents are now learn-

ing to suggest action rather than to command action. The easy, natural, unobtrusive suggestion of action has the further advantage of never creating obstinacy nor setting up any kind of resistance. The forms it may take are numerous. For example:

1. Since you probably agree that the time to decide a thing is while the facts are fresh in mind, we inclose a postal card for your convenience for making inquiries for prices and further descriptions.

2. If the need is immediate, just call number 7029.

3. We'll welcome an opportunity to demonstrate how ably we can serve you with an investment in good appearance.

4. Compare our prices with what you have been paying, having in mind the distinct understanding and agreement that the tags we furnish must satisfy you as to the quality of the stock and workmanship; then let the facts decide. What do you say?

Original wording works constructively towards the end desired. Weak, trite, irrelevant, and indifferent endings always produce an anti-climax. The following illustrate various types of ineffective endings:

1. **TRITE AND LACKING IN INTENSITY:** We want to thank you in advance for filling out the order and assure you that we shall deem it a pleasure to be of service to you at any time.

2. **WEAK CONSTRUCTION AND PHRASING:** Hoping to receive a reply and further request for information, etc.

3. **LACKING IN SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS:** We should appreciate an opportunity of serving you.

4. **OVERWORKED COMMAND:** Fill in and return the enclosed postal card.

5. **STEREOTYPED PHRASES:** Awaiting your reply.  
Hoping to receive your order.

6. **NEGATIVE SUGGESTIONS:** I don't suppose you want to do anything about the matter at this time, but I thought I would tell you about it anyway.

If you accept the offer, depend upon us to be at your service.

Don't turn on your heel and walk away without a word.

If you are interested, wire or write for samples and further particulars of our proposition.

If interested advise us how many square feet you will have for treatment, and we will be pleased to send further information as to the quantity needed and the cost.

7. **ASKING A FAVOR:** Thanks for your courtesy in replying at once.

We hope you will favor us with an order at once.

There are as many forms of endings as there are forms of beginnings of letters. The following have been used successfully:

1. **Statement:** An inquiry will put you under no obligation whatsoever.

2. **Question:** We have prepared a brochure for limited distribution among men who, we believe, will be interested in these facts. May we send it?

3. **Condition:** If you are entertaining the club soon, Call Main 500, and surprise your guests with one of these delicious ices.

4. **Command:** Fill out the enclosed card and put it in your out-going mail.

5. Invitation: We are open at 8:15 every morning. We will be downright glad to have you drop in.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the success of the clincher depends upon building the letter about one strong central selling point. If logically planned, the whole message, from the first word of the opening to the last word of the clincher, should lead the reader's mind to the point where action will be inevitable. Most of the difficulty of devising beginnings and endings disappears if the writer adapts his message to the reader's real interests and offers a product or service actually worth the price. The letters quoted in foregoing chapters are worthy of analysis from this point of view. For this and other reasons, the following letter is quoted in full:

Dear Reader:

The autumn wave of books has reached its crest. Among the deluge of new volumes are many that contain valuable ideas and rich entertainment and inspiration for you. The progress of the world is marked by these new books, and you, we are sure, desire to keep in step. May we ask what you are doing to keep abreast of the worth while new volumes?

What, for instance, have you learned concerning Willa Cather's, Dorothy Canfield's, Sinclair Lewis's, or Joseph Hergesheimer's latest novel? What about the "Letters of Franklin K. Lane?" What about the new books your club lecture will discuss?

What about the rebellious young? The intellectuals? The question of morality in fiction? The predicted reaction in poetry?

These and many other important books and literary topics will be discussed by your circle this winter. Will you take part in the chat, or will you fumble and flounder because you have been too busy to keep up with contemporary literature? If you teach, preach, write, read, or lecture, there is need for you to know the gist of the new books.

Of course, you cannot be expected to know the contents of all of the 20,000 books published in English each year, or to hear of the new authors and their work, but how do others manage to keep so well informed? The answer is—*The Literary Review* of the New York Evening Post.

You are invited to join that national society of book-lovers, meeting in the pages of the *Literary Review*. You are asked to form a link in a circle of editors, contributors, and readers who are so intimate and alert and open-minded and devoted to good reading and good writing that they have made *The Literary Review* unique among periodicals.

In the course of a year *The Literary Review*, a weekly magazine for booklovers, deals with some 5,000 books, published in this country and abroad. Every striking novel, every significant work of history or science, every outstanding book of poetry appears in its pages. It employs just the right scholar, critic, scientist, statesman or man or woman of letters to review the books it selects. It serves neither group nor movement—it serves literature. H. L. Mencken says it is "the best literary magazine ever set up in America."

The membership price? Less than a theatre ticket. Just a little more than the cost of one novel. The card gives you entrance to this friendly community of book-lovers—please mail it now.

Very truly yours,



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SALES FOLLOW-UP

#### PART I

- A. Definition
- B. The Use of the Sales Follow-Up
- C. Factors Determining the Use of the Follow-Up
- D. The Length of the Follow-Up
- E. Interval Between Letters
- F. Timing the Arrival of Follow-Up Letters
- G. The Mailing List
- H. Main Types of Sales Campaigns
- I. The Wear-Out Follow-Up
- J. The Continuous Follow-Up
- K. The Campaign Follow-Up
- L. Special Problems of Follow-Ups
- M. Sales Steps in the Follow-Up
- N. Testing Follow-Ups

#### PART II

- A. The Follow-Up to Inquiries

**Definition.**—The sales follow-up campaign is a series of letters, or letters and other forms of sales effort such as catalogues, booklets, broadsides, mailing cards, samples, double postals, calendars, novelties, and order forms or cards, used to make a sale where success depends on repetition and variety of effort. It is a complete sales letter or a strung-out sales letter, the various units of which seek to attract attention, create interest, gain conviction, and start action.

This chapter will deal with the kind of follow-up work performed mainly by letters and enclosures. It has two divisions:

1. Follow-up designed to open relations with consumer or retailer.
2. Follow-up to consumer or retailer who has inquired.

**The Uses of the Sales Follow-up.**—The uses of the sales follow-up are the same as those of sales letters enumerated in Chapter XXI:

1. To advertise.
2. To prepare a customer for a salesman's call.
3. To prepare a dealer for a salesman's call.
4. To sell direct by mail to a consumer.
5. To sell direct by mail to a dealer.
6. To induce a customer to come to a store to buy.
7. To answer inquiries.

**Factors Determining the Use of the Follow-up.**—Of the many conditions which make the employment of the follow-up necessary, some of the main ones are as follows:

1. If the amount of money to be expended is great in proportion to one's total wealth or salary.
2. If the payments for the product or service extends over a long period of time.
3. Where continued application and study on the part of the buyer is necessary to give his purchase value.
4. If the use of the product may involve considerable indirect cost in case it is not satisfactory, or require definite training for the proper use of it.
5. If the newness of the type of product on the market or the prospect's unfamiliarity with it necessitates educating the prospect to acknowledge its economy and use.

On the other hand, there are cases in which a follow-up is

not expedient: it may not be justified by the profit derived when the sale is made; or, the product may be sold only through a dealer or a personal representative.

**The Length of the Follow-up.**—The length of the follow-up is determined by the money element: the nature of the goods, their price, the cost of the campaign, and the margin of profit to be made on the product; and by the personal element: the type of prospect, and the amount of time and information needed to educate the potential buyer. A manufacturer of patterns is authority for the statement that one order from a prospect after a continuous follow-up for eleven years made the series profitable. He was not considering the repeat orders which resulted. The nature of his goods and his large margin of profit allowed a follow-up of indefinite length. On the other hand, an advertising counsel for a correspondence school says that the school keeps a careful record of results from a wear-out campaign and terminates it when it reaches the point where the desired profit ceases to result from sales.

The length of a series of letters varies with the type of purchaser. It must be adapted to the buying habits of people, which are determined by age, sex, and economic condition. A young person comes to a buying decision more quickly than a mature person, and a man than a woman. People without wealth often spend more freely than those with wealth. Moreover, the length of the series varies in proportion to the amount of time and information needed to educate the potential buyer. A longer series of letters is needed to sell bonds to a woman teacher than to a business woman; to a farmer than to a business man. Before the prospect's account can be secured, he must usually be convinced that buying bonds fits his savings or investment needs better than building and loan, real estate, or insurance. Then his confidence in the institution and in its representatives must be secured.

**Interval Between Letters.**—The interval between letters varies with the nature of the product, with the method of

selling used to influence the potential buyer, argument or suggestion, and with the distance of the buyer from the firm addressed. If the product is one on which a prospect is likely to reach a quick decision, sporting goods for example, the time interval should be only long enough to allow a prospect to reply. On the other hand, it is not reasonable to suppose that a person will contract for bonds, insurance, automobiles, or expensive radios without taking plenty of time to consider the purchase. If the correspondent deems it wise to employ argument instead of suggestion, because of the nature of the prospect, product and price, he waits a longer time to reply. If the firm using the follow-up is located in New York, and the prospect addressed is in Los Angeles or Seattle, it is necessary to allow a longer interval than the conventional ten days between mailings. In fact, data such as that given on pages 228-229 showing the time interval between the inquiry sent to a list of three hundred and ninety-two national advertisers and the reply from them can be fairly interpreted only when a classification of distances involved is also given.

**Timing the Arrival of Follow-up Letters.**—The arrival of follow-up sales letters should be timed to secure the best results, and results are dependent upon the mood, the needs, and the probability of attention by the prospect. Timing means considering the season of the year, the day of the month, the day of the week, and the hour of the day. Investigation has demonstrated that Monday and Saturday are poor days for housewives or business men to receive letters. The housewife is occupied especially on these days with household duties. The mail of the business man is unusually heavy on Monday, and he is too rushed on Saturday, cleaning up the work of the week to pay attention to other than the necessary mail. Letter campaigns gain greatly by being seasonable.

**The Mailing List.**—The mailing list is merely a collection of names of those people who are logical buyers of the product one is attempting to sell by means of a sales cam-

paign. If it is made from a general list for a firm, it is valuable only when it is split into classes by standards of living, age, or sex, to designate which are prospects in the true sense of the term.

**Main Types of Sales Campaigns.**—The main types of follow-up sales campaigns are the Wear-out, the Continuous, and the Campaign System.

**The Wear-Out Follow-Up.**—The wear-out follow-up is distinguished by the fact that the various letters of its series are sent to the same list of potential buyers as long as returns make it profitable; each letter is a complete sales canvass in that it is built to take every step in the selling process from winning attention to compelling action. Each letter presents the central selling point from a new angle, or repeats it in different words; each letter, bulletin, or mailing piece is written after returns have been received from the previous mailing. The following two letters for clothing sent to business and professional men are a part of a wear-out follow-up series to be used by a store with a classified mailing list, and a card record of purchases by recipients of the campaign.

### *Letter I*

Dear Sir:

By the time this letter reaches you we'll be ready to show the finest stock of spring clothes we ever had.

It may be some time, of course, before you'll want to wear spring clothes, but by then the range of choice won't be what it is now.

Why not choose now and buy later? We'll gladly hold your choice for you.

In our finer Hart Schaffner & Marx clothes you'll find all the style, dignity, all the fine tailoring and rich quality that the most expensive tailors have to offer. The only difference is in the price.

The store isn't crowded now, and stocks are at their best. It's a fine time to pick the clothes you want for spring.

Yours truly,

## *Letter II*

Dear Mr. Blank:

We're in a position to give you clothes of superlative quality at mighty reasonable prices.

They are clothes any man would be proud to wear—dignified, faultlessly styled, richly woven. All of them are distinguished by the fine tailoring of Hart Schaffner & Marx, who made them for us.

You can get clothes like them by paying fancy prices to some one of a very few exclusive tailors. Our prices aren't fancy. They'll surprise you pleasantly.

Naturally there's going to be a big demand for clothes like these. The time to buy is now, while you have the whole range of style and materials to choose from.

Yours truly,

Each of these letters is complete within itself; the second letter makes no reference to the preceding. Each is a repetition of the outstanding selling point.

The wear-out campaign is usually employed to sell low priced products, but sometimes it is valuable for those of high price. A canning factory used to sell assorted carload lots of vegetables costing a considerable sum. It mailed a letter or a bulletin every fourth day throughout a period of three and one-half months and thus created an enormous demand for its canned goods. The central talking point was the advantage of buying assorted carload lots of canned vegetables, because such a method kept capital invested in stock low, while it permitted carload lot prices, with attend-



ant economy in buying. The supplementary talking point was the value of using printed labels for one's own brand of product.

Each letter featured a particular vegetable: lima beans, dwarf June peas, and sugar-corn, but each repeated the central talking point: "Buy canned goods in assorted carload lots and use your own printed label." The bulletins were used to sell the prospect confidence in the ability of the factory to supply carload lots promptly.

**The Continuous Follow-Up.**—The continuous follow-up is the means by which a firm keeps its "lights brightly burning," year in and year out, season by season, and month by month. It brings to a customer's attention at an opportune time its product and its services. It makes graduations, marriages, promotions, anniversaries, and holidays the occasions for their special presentation. Retail merchants enclose sales literature in the same envelope with their monthly statements; power and light companies follow the same plan in selling their service; and corporations enclose advertising literature with their dividend checks. Sales managers keep in touch with their salesmen, and salesmen with their customers, through the continuous follow-up. The following topics, descriptive of letters used, the one by a clothing store and the other by a department store, suggest the nature of the work which the continuous follow-up may do for a firm.

### I. Letters for Special Occasions

- A. Letters to boys graduating from the eighth grade
- B. Letters to high school graduates
- C. Letters to college graduates
- D. Letters to parents whose sons are graduating from high school and college

### II. Letters Appropriate to Months of the Year

- A. January and February Letters: Sales
- B. March Letters: Season's "First Showing"

- C. April Letters: Rain Garments—General Lines
- D. May Letters: Straw Hats—Decoration Day—Sporting Goods
- E. June Letters: Weddings — Graduations — Vacation Clothes
- F. July Letters: Straw Hats—Tropical Suits—Sport Clothes
- G. August Letters: Sales—Cool Clothes—School Clothes
- H. September Letters: New Models—School Clothes—Medium-Weight Wearables—Bed Clothes
- I. October Letters: Men's Wear—Women's Clothes—Evening Wear—Hallowe'en
- J. November Letters: Dress Attire—Warm Clothing—Sports Wear—Thanksgiving—Foot Ball
- K. December Letters: Christmas Shopping

**The Campaign Follow-Up.**—The campaign follow-up is a series of letters designed with the purpose of taking all the steps of sales procedure necessary to attain a definite end. The number of letters, duration of campaign, and time interval between pieces are all predetermined. The underlying principle of the campaign follow-up is its logical procedure of presenting information, effective impressions, and intensifying impressions at definite intervals. No letter of the series is a complete sales letter; one or a group of letters may be designed only to attract attention, create interest, gain belief, and induce action. At least the greater part of the letter is given over to the performance of one function.

The following series of sales letters on men's clothing illustrates the campaign system:

### *Letter I*

March 19, 1925

Mr. Blank:

One of our good customers in the University tells us you know a good suit of clothes just a little better than anybody he knows.

He says, too, that because you do know, you ought to be a customer of ours. Tell us what you call a good suit,

Mr. Myers, and let us show you how near we come to having it.

We'll appreciate it,

BLANK & COMPANY

*Letter II*

March 20, 1925

Mr. Blank:

P. S.—to our letter of this morning.

Don't you agree with us, Mr. Myers, that \$50.00 is about the right price for a good English Suit?

BLANK & COMPANY

*Letter III*

March 25, 1925.

Mr. Blank:

The suits we sell most of our customers look like \$60.00.

They pay only \$50.00.

If we put more into the work and less into the cloth, they'd cost \$60.00 and be worth \$50.00. As it is, Mr. Myers, they cost \$50.00 and are worth \$60.00. Wouldn't you do it that way?

Let us show you.

BLANK & COMPANY

*Letter IV*

March 28, 1925

Mr. Blank:

Do you know any of our boys?

They're part of our clothes, you know.

Part of our service, too, Mr. Myers.

You can take their word for it if they say a suit looks right on you.

Meet them.

BLANK AND COMPANY

*Letter V*

April 1, 1925

Mr. Blank:

A suit is a state of mind.

Our suits make a thirty cent lunch seem like a banquet, Mr. Myers.

It's worth trying a "thirty cent" lunch in one of our \$50.00 suits to prove this to yourself.

Satisfy yourself.

BLANK AND COMPANY.

*Letter VI*

April 4, 1925.

Mr. Blank:

Have we your address wrong?

Or have you ours wrong?

Or aren't you interested in good clothes, Mr. Myers?

You're welcome any time.

BLANK AND COMPANY.

*Letter VII*

April 16, 1925.

Mr. Blank:

Telegraph us, collect, the words,

"I am coming over for a suit."

Sincerely,

BLANK AND COMPANY.

The Campaign Follow-Up is seldom confined to letters. It makes liberal use of all the forms of direct by mail literature to accomplish the successive steps of a sale. For example, a complete direct mail advertising campaign for group insurance having the following purpose: "to open doors that have been closed to you (salesmen of group insurance), open minds that have been closed to group insurance until now, and to open accounts for you that will later include many or even all, of The Blank lines," used three booklets, three circulars, and a folder to accomplish its purpose, seven pieces in all.

1. Booklet: "Who Pays for Group Insurance?"
2. Circular showing scales with Group Insurance outweighing the cost.
3. Circular with two-square chart putting the cost of Group Insurance in proper perspective.
4. Folder: "Which Will It Be?" Picture I shows employees with chins out, prepared for an argument, calling on the president. Picture II shows them smiling, ready for a friendly chat.
5. Circular: "You Who Employ Labor." Digest of points which an employer who would buy Group Insurance would reasonably want to know.

## 6. Booklet: "What Group Insurance Is."

## 7. Booklet: "Is She the Widow of One of the Men Who Worked for You?"

The best results were attained from the series when each piece of it was mailed with clock-like regularity once a week.

**Special Problems of Follow-Ups.**—"My letter must be read" is the first consideration of the correspondent who writes a sales campaign. With this in mind he designs the first letter of his campaign and the first paragraph of each letter. His devices to win attention are as ingenious as his intelligence can make them. He uses personal note stationery and gives sales letters the appearance of being written in longhand. He reproduces a personal message in the handwriting of the author of the campaign on the envelope or in the margin of the letter. He employs large-sized envelopes, or some 6 x 12, or some very tiny; and he splashes vivid colors skillfully to attract attention. Orange and black, or red and black are favorite for this purpose. Attractive letterheads on substantial paper, copy social usage in order to make the letters appear distinctive. The same means of attracting attention used in the single sales letter are employed to make the beginning of each letter of the series win the reader.

Another problem of the follow-up is to make effective use of catalogues, booklets, and folders, with the purpose of supplementing the message of the letter; they should not, however, be emphasized to the extent that the letter is the least important part of the series. Where printed matter accompanies the follow-up letter, it should be called to the reader's attention; different references should be made to points selected for their value in supplementing the function the particular piece of the campaign is designed to perform.

The letter may be considered in some cases a bait to entice the customer to read the booklets and the catalogues. In such cases, its contents must have specific and interesting



statements that guide the reader to the essential information contained in the enclosure. The opening piece of many campaigns is designed to induce the recipient to request a catalogue or booklet, which forms the second piece of the sales campaign. Seldom is it found desirable for the sales letter to precede the booklet or catalogue at long intervals. The letter is likely to be lost before the catalogue is received and the relation between the two forgotten.

A third problem is to sustain interest in the series until the prospect has been told what he should know before he will decide to buy. The sustaining of interest in the follow-up depends upon the variety in the form of the mailing piece, and the variety in the appeal as well as its appropriateness (upon the progress made in the presentation of the sales appeal), the concentration on a new talking point and one single idea in each piece, stimulation of curiosity as to the content of the succeeding piece.

**The Sales Steps in the Follow-Up.**—The ultimate success of the wear-out follow-up or of the campaign follow-up depends upon all the functions of salesmanship being performed. If reference is made in the campaign follow-up, however, to former letters in order to link the message of the letter with the preceding one, it is necessary to make the reference positive and optimistic in order to create the right mood in the reader. Such an example is:

Dear Mr. Blank:

Some of you dared us.

When we wrote a number of business men, yourself included, several weeks ago, offering the Blank plan of business-letter writing complete in one volume at the introductory price of \$12.50 some of you replied: "If you believe in your system send it on to me."

It is highly important in opening paragraphs of a series, to avoid negative and weak reference to former letters, such as the following:

Dear Mr. Blank:

We are disappointed that you do not see the value of the course concerning which we have given you information in answer to your inquiry.

or,

I visited you many times through the mail and have not been successful in securing your permission to explain just what our service is. What is the trouble?

The fundamental principle of arousing interest is to sell functions of products and services. The fundamental carrying principle of conviction is to make reasonable statements in a sincere manner and to supplement them with such tests, testimonials, and samples as are appropriate to the product under consideration.

The elements of a clincher are:

1. A clear statement in the last letter, or in the last of a group of letters constituting the proposition, of just what response is desired from the prospect.
2. An explanation of the manner in which he is to respond.
3. An inducement to make him act at once.

**Testing Follow-Ups.**—Because of the expense of the follow-up, it is usually tested as to whether or not it will be profitable before it is reproduced and sent out by the thousands or tens of thousands. To be specific, before preparing ten thousand letters, it is desirable to make the mailing list and send out one thousand to test what results are attained. The percentage of returns resulting from the trial can usually be taken as representative of the results to be expected from the entire list. Tests may also be made of the effectiveness of one and one-half or two-cent stamps on envelopes, or of various types of order blanks, or of the practice of including typed envelopes for replies.

## PART II.

**The Follow-Up To Inquiries.**—The importance of the sales letter which answers an inquiry, either uninvited or

solicited by sales letters and advertising, is due to its place in the merchandising chain. It has the power of bringing the advertising and sales effort to fruition or of nullifying it. It requires the same skill in salesmanship as does advertising. Its direct cost is those of the factors necessary to produce it, but its indirect cost is lost business.

The discussion of answering inquiries in Chapter XII was limited to such cases as require only a single-letter answer. That given here concerns answers to inquiries created by advertising and sales campaigns which require a follow-up to make the answer accomplish what it is supposed to accomplish.

Letters to follow-up inquiries have many functions to perform in finally effecting a sale either by means of letters or by personal salesmen. The various functions of letters may be listed as follows:

1. They may turn the inquirer's favorable attention into active interest by pointing out how the product or service fills his particular needs.
2. They may help the literature accomplish its predetermined function by inducing the prospect to read it.
3. They may lead the inquirer to state his particular needs so definitely that individualized and personalized service may be given him by letter or by a personal salesman.
4. They may so intensify interest in a product that a salesman will be invited to call.
5. They may secure the information, either through the silence of a customer or through his definite answer, that is needed at certain stages in the procedure of following up his inquiry.
6. They may keep the channels of communication open between a prospect and a house until the house can discover just where the prospect stands in reference to a buying decision.
7. They may close in upon a prospect by overcoming obstacles to buying.

*Illustration I*

The following is an example of a form letter sent in response to a request for a booklet on bonds advertised in magazines. Analysis will show how some of the functions outlined above are performed. Its personal quality typifies the chief feature distinguishing the follow-up which is invited from one which is not invited.

**A GOOD TIME TO INVEST**

"Safe Bonds for Investment," the booklet you requested, is enclosed.

This booklet is more than the ordinary list of bond holdings,—it is rather a guide to safe investment, giving, as it does, information about the present bond market in general and the principal types of bonds specifically, as well as brief descriptions of several Public Utility, Industrial, and Tax-Exempt Bonds which are outstanding values in the present market.

As mentioned in the advertisement which prompted your inquiry, the present level of bond prices marks one of the infrequent periods when standard bonds can be purchased to yield more than the normal rate of income. The reasons for this are given on page 3 of the booklet. After you have read this and the brief articles at the top of pages 6, 10, and 13, you will agree, we believe, that now is *A GOOD TIME TO INVEST*.

Among the bonds described in the book, you will surely find issues that fit your individual requirements, for the list is diversified not only as to type, but also as to length of maturity, interest-yield, and taxable status. All of these issues have been purchased outright by us only after searching investigation to assure ourselves of their safety.

To acquaint you further with the general character of our bond offerings, we would direct your attention to the center spread of the booklet showing a list of representative Public Utility Companies with whose financing we are identified.

If you will use the enclosed card to inform us regarding your investment preferences, additional information regarding specific bond offerings selected to conform to your needs will be cheerfully supplied. If, however, you are now ready to make your selection, the order blank on page 15 may be used to advantage.

Very truly yours,

The correspondent here attempts to turn favorable attention manifested by an inquiry into interest by describing the booklet in terms of the inquirer's use for it: "It is rather a guide to safe investment."

He seeks further interest by giving description of its make-up: "The booklet gives information about the present bond market in general and the principal types of bonds specifically, as well as brief descriptions of several Public Utility, Industrial, and Tax-Exempt Bonds. . . ." Paragraph number three guides the inquirer to specific pages in the booklet and centers attention on particular features of the present bond market mentioned there that support the statement:

**"NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO INVEST."**

The last sentence has as its purpose finding where the prospect stands on the question: "If, however, you are now ready to make your selection, the order blank on page 15 may be used to advantage." At the same time the letter keeps the door open if the inquirer is not ready to decide: "If you will use the enclosed card to inform us regarding your investment preferences, additional information regarding specific bond offerings selected to conform to your needs will be carefully supplied."

### *Illustration II*

The purpose of this letter is likewise to insure the reading of the booklet which is being sent to the inquirer. In the absence of specific information as to his particular needs, several possible needs are proposed, some one of which must

be the right one. The writer of the letter hopes to show the inquirer that the booklet contains "worth while" information for him, by showing just where he may find that information. Finally, the letter suggests the source of obtaining personalized information: "Ask a salesman in a Blank store," which the P. S. indicates is in the inquirer's city. The correspondent keeps the door open by adding, "Call on us for other information."

Dear Sir:

We are sending you our new booklet, "Choosing the Rug for Your Interior Scheme," as you requested.

"Your interior scheme" may be for your office. If so, we are specially glad to be of service, for we believe a man's office should be as attractive as his home, in its own appropriate way.

Or it may be you are interested in carpeting for a club, a theatre, hotel, or other public place. On page 12 of the booklet, under the heading, "The use of Blank in larger and more public places," you will find exactly the information you wish about the remarkable *all-linen* floor covering.

Whatever your use for a rug or carpet, you will find a thorough investigation of the subject well worth while. After you have read the Blank story, we suggest you ask a salesman in a Blank store for further facts, based on his selling experience. He will be glad to show you Blank and advise you for your needs.

Call on us for any other information; we shall be glad to supply it.

Yours very truly,

THE BLANK LINEN LOOMS, INC.

D. S. Horak.

P. S. Blank Linen Rugs are sold in your city by C. A. Kilerover.



*Illustration III*

An answer to an inquiry concerning a one-room school building to accommodate thirty-eight pupils, and the follow-up accompanying it, constitute a complete follow-up used to answer an inquiry. The inquiry reads as follows, "Please send me description and prices of your portable schools for about 38 or 40 students."

Gentlemen:

The one-room school building on page 7 of the enclosed brochure will seat 38 to 42 pupils without crowding them, and, hence, will seat your 35 pupils comfortably.

They are attractive in appearance, sound in construction, schools which will give your children ample light, heat, and ventilation.

If you should see the Circle A Portable School at Haverville such as is referred to above, you will find a portable school house for all material purposes not unlike other frame-buildings.

It is pleasing to the eye, large enough to house the number of pupils who can be handled efficiently by one teacher, has windows sufficient in number and so placed as to prevent eye-strain, the required ventilation for state and municipal regulations, insulation which makes the occupants indifferent to the winter cold of Dakota or the summer heat of Mississippi.

So easily and quickly can this building be put up and with so little of the fuss and bother incident to the erection of other schools, that it compels such commendation as "The building exceeded our expectations in every respect. A permanent building could be no better."

What creates this whole-hearted approval? There are several reasons. Their high quality of materials, their principle of erection which insures both sturdy con-

struction and ease in erection, and their portability. Pages 1 and 2 will help you understand why all that is required to erect "Circle A" Schools is the labor of bolting units together. Moreover, we furnish at a nominal charge a superintendent when the board erects its own building.

Circle A Schools are the only school buildings that have their plaster and interior finish complete at the factory.

Please feel free to come right back at us with specific questions if we have not given you the information you desire.

We feel reasonably sure that the school described on page 7 meets the need named in your inquiry. And you may have this school ready for occupancy by telegraphing us your order,

Very truly yours,

If no reply is received to the above letter, the following letter serves to keep the channels open for further communication with a prospect and aims to discover just where he stands with reference to buying:

#### *Illustration IV*

Dear Mr. Blank:

In answer to your request we sent you a description of the best liked "Circle A" schools and quoted prices.

Since we have had no answer, we assume that either you have made other arrangements to house your school children, or we did not make you realize that "Circle A" schools do fill your particular needs.

To help you, we need to know your fundamental needs and know them in detail.

1. How many children do your present facilities fail to house satisfactorily?

2. What location is available?
3. Are you concerned most with durability, portability, ease of providing schools, or quickness in providing them?

We feel very certain that if we know your needs, we can make plans, terms, etc., that will suit you.

Will you give us a chance to prove it by writing to us?

Yours sincerely,

### *Illustration V*

The following letter suggests that the inquirer will probably find the solution of his problem in the way another person has solved a similar problem:

Dear Mr. Blank:

"Circle A" buildings, as are described and as have specifications given in the catalogue which we sent you, are in use at ———. These particular schools were used in preference to others largely because of their careful construction, their satisfactory lighting and ventilation.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Blank, the superintendent at ———, will tell you the satisfaction which they have given.

Your board members will probably have a lot of questions to ask about these buildings. We shall be glad to send you additional information, or, better still, a representative to assist you in answering these questions if you will let us know when it will be desirable.

It will place you under no obligation, but will give us information that will enable us to handle the problem intelligently for you.

Yours truly,

The correspondent is here proceeding with his campaign of letters to get enough information to enable him to center the prospect's attention on the right issue. He knows he will receive a response if he can tap the real needs of the prospect and remove whatever obstacles stand in the way of buying. Hence, in the following letters, he assumes one need after another or one obstacle after another, showing how the product will fill each need and attempting to clear away each obstacle in turn. This process closes in upon the prospect by lopping off his possible objections. One letter may make a point of the *appearance* of the "Circle A" schools, another, their *durability*, another, *ventilation*, and another, *warmth*.

### *Illustration VI*

The following letter makes a point of *price*, which is fairly low considering the high salvage returns:

Dear Mr. Blank:

Are you in doubt about the price of the "Circle A" schools? They are built as few other frame structures are built. The foundation posts have blocks at the base to prevent settling; the interior lining comes as an integral part of the sections; the doors are in place with all hardware on them, even the windows are hung in place.

These are the things which distinguish "Circle A" Schools from others. They are the points which return high salvage if it becomes necessary to move or sell the building.

The buildings are worth your greatest consideration. You should let us know more about your problem.

Yours sincerely,

The repetition of effort has a cumulative effect. No suggestion of coldness or apology should creep into the

campaign: rather should the tone of each letter grow more personal and persuasive. The series continues until the prospect replies, or until his continued silence makes further correspondence unwarranted.

### *Illustration VII*

Such a letter as the following is sometimes used to shut off follow-ups when they can be of no possible value at present, and to open the door for later follow-ups:

Dear Mr. Blank:

What are the prospects of shipping one or more of our buildings to you for use this school year?

The need for such buildings may temporarily be past; then, of course, you will probably prefer that we bring this to your attention again at a later date.

We do feel that we have a satisfactory, easy, and economical way of solving your school building problems. Just fill out the enclosed card, and we'll do as you request.

Yours sincerely,

The items on the enclosed card are as follows:

Is there still a need? .....  
 We have solved our problem by .....  
 We have not solved our problem by .....  
 Will be brought up for decision about.....  
 Write us again about .....  
 Have a representative see us .....

This brief discussion of the following up of inquiries shows how important it is for the sales correspondent to watch the following chief points in composing the first letter, in order to get a running start in his campaign:

1. Having a weather eye for the specific need of the inquirer to which the specific service of the product can be fitted.
2. Guiding the reader to specific pages in the booklet or catalogue sent out.
3. Leading from the specific way in which the product fills a need of the inquirer, to a standard of comparison by which the product excels others of the same type.
4. Making the reader see vividly the relation of the product to himself.
5. Using simple, accurate, adapted, and vivid diction.
6. Adapting the letter to the inquirer's character and circumstances so far as they can be discovered.



PART IV  
REPORTS



## CHAPTER XXIII

### REPORTS

- A. Origin of Reports
- B. Definition of Reports
- C. Reports Compared and Contrasted with Letters
- D. Importance of Reports
- E. Value of Studying Report Writing
- F. Types of Reports
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**Origin of Reports.**—Just as the tremendous growth of modern business in scope and complexity has made direct personal contact of producer and consumer impossible, and occasioned the multiplicity of business letters, so it has separated the employer and employee and occasioned a vast number of reports. Rising standards of efficiency and service in modern business do not permit executives to solve

important problems in an offhand manner. They cannot always depend upon past experience. They want special investigations and careful analyses as bases for formulating decisions, and delegate, therefore, to an employee already in the firm, or to a man whom they engage for the purpose, the responsibility of securing such facts as they need in order to make a specific decision. The employer then becomes a client. In fact, industry has become so dependent upon the work of specialists that more frequently than not, the person engaged to make the report is superior in professional rank to the man who employs him. The traditional attitude of employer to employee does not obtain.

Or an employee with initiative and vision may see the desirability of some change in the operation of a business. He may see some difficulty to be removed, some benefit to be tested. His method of accomplishing such a change is to present to the right executive the facts, a knowledge of which will result in the desired action. Reports, if they make the desired impression, can accomplish an unusual number of things.

**Definition of a Report.**—A report is a term used in business to designate accurate, impersonal, and full presentation usually of first-hand information.

The information is either:

1. A record of past activities.
2. An analysis of conditions, past and present, to the end of determining future actions and policies. Sometimes it includes a writer's opinions, conclusions, and recommendations.

**Reports Compared and Contrasted with Letters.**—Reports have much in common with letters. In inception, they are not unlike letters and, as written communications, they have the same characteristics as letters. They are prepared as a matter of course in connection with duties. The incentive for writing them often comes from the reader and the reception a reader accords reports is the same as he

would accord a letter answering his inquiry. They, like letters, record the past, reflect the present, and forecast the future. They observe most of the conventions of letters especially in formal reports.

Reports have, however, certain marked differences from letters. They go to a person who has authorized them; hence it is not so important for them to be interesting. Also, administrative reports are more permanent in character. A report is referred to again and again. Letters are usually read once and laid aside; reports are usually more thorough, longer, and hence call for very much more careful planning. They call for a superior knowledge of subject matter and a superior degree of skill in presentation. They do not attempt directly to secure action, though action may result from them.

**Importance of Reports.**—Reports have been called tabloids of conditions, as they are, or as they ought to be. On their tabloid character partially rests their importance. In this form, information becomes usable, a time-saver, and a means of getting things done. They are of inestimable value in operation and marketing. Besides their value as a means of communication between those interested in the conduct of affairs of an institution, they are of value as was pointed out in comparing them with letters, as permanent records of conditions or activities after the immediate occasion for the report has passed.

Because executives in institutions change, administration reports left by former executives are especially valuable. They are the means of putting before the stockholders of a firm the facts they should know.

Reports of activities are highly valuable to public organizations such as universities, municipalities, state governments, and to private organizations. They give officers, representatives, and committees of large organizations a means of bringing before their constituents a record of activities which form a basis for their judgment and gain their co-operation for proposed activities.

**Value of Studying Report-Writing.**—One who expects to assume an active part in business or world affairs needs a knowledge of types, elements, and characteristics of reports, as well as skill in writing them. As an executive, he will be called upon to write reports, or to read, analyze, and pass upon those which other people have written. If he writes a report, he will have an opportunity to show, to the person who has authorized it, his initiative and judgment by the forethought and the precision with which he has anticipated and recorded facts. He may, on the other hand, destroy the value of painstaking research by submitting inadequate reports. If it becomes his duty to pass upon reports, he will be better able to judge their quality by knowing their essentials. Reading reports of experts will give him a chance to observe their standards of excellence in content and in form.

Although good business reports are one of the most practical forms of business communication, effective reports are so rare that a man who excels in writing them has a distinct advantage in the business world. He has a fine opportunity to distinguish himself by setting new standards for reports in an organization where improvement in report-making has not kept pace with improvements in correspondence. He may set new standards in form and content.

**Types of Reports.**—Since authorities on report-making do not agree as to the bases of division of reports into classes, various classifications of types are distinguished according to the various bases used. One classification makes time the base and distinguishes reports as (1) records of past activities; (2) information which a reader needs for his future plans and actions. Another classification recognizes these three types:

1. *Period Report*, which gives a history of past activities.
2. *Examination Report*, which gives a statement of facts, and analyses of conditions present and past, as a basis for estimates and forecasts.



3. *Research Report*, which is an investigation of conditions—usually of the physical characteristics of matter, such as strength of materials, quality of materials, and substitutions, not connected with any immediate problem.

Reports are also divided on the basis of the certainty of the facts presented as follows:

1. Those dealing with well-established facts:
  - A. Information report which is prepared by a writer who is familiar with a set of facts with which the reader is unacquainted.
  - B. Examination report which presents to an employer or a client data with which the author or reader of a report was unfamiliar at the time the report was authorized.
  - C. Recommendations, which result from information and examination report, made by an expert concerning operation and construction.
  - D. Progress report which is a record of the development of operations, construction, or the changes taking place in projects.
2. Those reports dealing with hypothetical facts concerned with the advance of knowledge and with the discovery of physical characteristics of matter, new organisms, or the formulation of new theories.

Again reports are classified as *regular* or *special*. The regular reports are for definite time periods, undertaken as a matter of course in connection with regular duties. Special reports are made on particular occasions when information and assistance are especially required. They grow out of a specific need of the reader rather than of the writer.

On the basis of arrangement, reports are classified as *form reports* and *composition reports*. The content and order of form reports are determined by the person who wants to know certain facts and who will read them. The choice of material and arrangement of the composition re-

port depends upon its purpose, its subject matter, and its writer.

Classified on the basis of length, there are short reports which follow the conventions of letters in units and arrangement, and long reports which follow the conventions established by usage in report-making, and careful tabulations.

COPY OF REPORT ON A PORTION OF THE  
KRUPP LEASE NEAR BROADHURST, KANSAS,  
BY CHARLES CROWLEY, GEOLOGIST

Harper, Kansas.

The White Petroleum Co.,  
Kansas City, Kansas.

Gentlemen:—

I have made a careful examination of the land in the north half of the southwest quarter of Section eighteen (18), Township twenty-one (21) south, Range five (5) east, which is covered by the oil and gas lease you recently purchased. I enclose, herewith, a structural map of this area showing contours with an interval of ten feet, the key bed used being the Winfield formation.

**Stratigraphy:** The formations at the surface are entirely of Permian age, being designed technically as the Broadhurst Flint, Ft. Riley, Limestone, Doyle Shale, and Winfield formations; the vertical sections of the outcropping beds cover a stratigraphic range of about 135 feet; beneath these formations are rocks of Pennsylvanian age. The great oil pools of Oklahoma and Kansas, such as Cushing, Eldorado, Augusta, Peabody, and Elbing all derive their oil from the Pennsylvanian. This formation is the greatest oil bearer in not only the Mid-Continent fold but the entire United States.

**Domes, Anticlines, and Terraces:** It has been conclusively proved during recent years that all large oil fields lie under Anticlines, Domes, and Terraces. The rea-

son is this: most of the porous stratified rocks are filled with water, oil, or gas. The oil and gas, being lighter than water, are constantly seeking a higher level; therefore, the upper parts or the folds of the sudden flattening of the strata are ideal for the accumulation or concentration of oil and gas, the water, oil, and gas arranging themselves according to their specific gravities.

**Broadhurst Structure:** The Broadhurst structure is a combination of anticline and terrace, the western part being a perfect half anticline with a terrace on the east. The terrace at this place has the same effect as a complete closure, so that a large quantity of oil may be lodged beneath it.

Your land lies very favorably with reference to the Broadhurst structure, being in almost perfect position; it is also only two locations from the discovery of this pool. Putting all these together, it would lead one to believe that this particular 80 acres is sure to produce excellent wells. I can, therefore, recommend it very highly, and confidently expect it to produce a large quantity of oil when properly developed.<sup>1</sup>

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) CHARLES CROWLEY

Reports divided upon the basis of the relation between the author of the report and the reader of the report are classified as: *administrative reports*, *professional reports*, and *independent reports*.

Administrative Reports are those made to stockholders and the public, usually annually by the president of a corporation or head of a concern. Reports of this nature referred to in succeeding pages are those made by the president of the Simmons Company to its stockholders, and that made by Merrill, Lynch, and Company concerning S. S. Kresge Company, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>1</sup>The structural map has been omitted, and names are changed.

Professional Reports are those made by specialists as associates for various clients. A file of reports from Frank D. Chase, Inc., of Chicago, includes such reports as *Report on Operation, Organization, and Systems of Accounting and Control for Pepsin Company at Monticello, Illinois*; *Report on Contemplated Foundry for McIntyre Manufacturing Company, St. Joseph, Missouri*; and *Report on the Brewery Property of Dick Brothers, Quincy, Illinois*.

Independent Reports are addressed to readers who may purchase them after their publication. They are not addressed to boards, committees, or commissions, but to all who are interested in the subject with which they deal. Their primary function is to inform. Often they are the results of investigations and are published as articles, treatises, bulletins, monographs, which contribute to the stock of human knowledge. Examples contained in this text are: *Report on Progress in Warm-Air Furnace Research*; and the *State of New York Report of the Special Joint Committee on Taxation and Retrenchment*.

They are differentiated from administrative and professional reports in that they have practically the same method of approach adopted by books. They employ the foreword in place of a letter of transmittal.

Classified on the basis of style, reports are *formal* or *informal*. In general, long reports are formal. They are influenced by definite methods of tabulation established by usage. Short reports are sometimes formal in style and sometimes informal, depending upon the relation existing between the author and the person to whom they are submitted. Formal style is always impersonal, conventional, and dignified; informal style reflects the author's personality, in method of approach and in treatment of the subject.

**Requisites of Reports.**—A man who writes a good report solves problems of finance, production, or management; or records in clear form the progress of an organization or project. He requires highly developed technical knowledge

and skill to collect and analyze data, judgment to determine the proper course of action, and command of expression to make the report readable and properly intelligible. He needs to be capable of doing searching, conscientious mental labor, of dealing with facts and conditions in a detailed and clear-sighted manner, and of using skill in formulation and presentation of data.

In the main, the language problems of reports are not unlike those of letters presented in Chapter VI. The language must be adapted to the capacity and the circumstances of the person for whom the report is written. It is not subjective expression, but objective. The writer always takes the logical point of view; neither the individuality of the writer nor of the reader dominates. The subject matter is the dominant factor. As differentiated from other types of business writing, the report has the essential characteristics of accuracy, impersonal clearness of statement, and full presentation of first-hand information. Of the five "C's" of business letters, clearness, conciseness, correctness, courtesy, and character, the first three are most vital to the business report.

**Elements of a Report.**—Long reports, that is, reports the text of which includes six or more pages, are made up of standardized units, as distinct in character as the heading, inside address, etc., of letters. They are named in the order of their appearance in the report: the title page, the table of contents, the letter of transmittal, the epitome or abstract, the text, the appendix, and the index.<sup>1</sup> Some of these units are vital, and all of them are usually included in the long report, formal in style.

*The Title Page.* The title page contains the essential facts regarding the author, the reader, and the subject matter of the report, just such information as is given in the heading, the inside address, and statement of subject matter

<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that the following illustrations of the elements of reports are not confined to reports in the business field, the forms may be taken as models for business reports.

A REPORT ON THE ADVISABILITY AND  
COST OF BUILDING A THREE STORY  
APARTMENT BUILDING CONTAINING  
TWELVE APARTMENTS AT SOUTH WEST  
CORNER OF NEVADA STREET AND COLER  
AVENUE, URBANA, ILLINOIS

SUBMITTED TO WILLIAM A. JOHN, WABASH, INDIANA, BY LEON A. WILLITSON  
CONSULTING CONTRACTOR, 1225 MAIN STREET, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

FIG. 10.  
(Title page from student's report.)



REPORT OF PROGRESS  
IN  
WARM-AIR FURNACE RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED BY  
THE ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
IN COÖPERATION WITH  
THE  
NATIONAL WARM-AIR HEATING AND VENTILATING  
ASSOCIATION  
BY  
A. C. WILLARD  
PROFESSOR OF HEATING AND VENTILATION

ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION  
PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, URBANA

FIG. 11.

(Reprinted by permission.)

in a letter. Its function is to indicate the relation existing between author and reader and to establish in the mind of the reader the right point of view toward the subject. Two forms, dependent upon whether or not the report is type or printed, have developed in practice.

Variations in typed title pages are secured by using different type-shapes—the diamond shape, for instance. Other variations are secured by spacing, capitalization, and underscoring.

The printed title page is similar to the form used in books. It consists of a short title, as: *Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals in Chicago*, and the full title containing reference to those who are responsible for the undertaking, the name of the author, a note on the place and date of publication; or as: *Report of the Chicago Association of Commerce, Committee of Investigation on Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals*, W. T. M. Goss, Chief Engineer, Chicago, 1915.

The interdepartmental route reports of commercial and industrial houses in which the text is often confidential and the style informal, furnish variations in reports as follows:

### *Illustration I*

#### Military Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
TO \_\_\_\_\_  
FROM \_\_\_\_\_  
SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

### *Illustration II*

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Memorandum for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
From Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
In the Matter of \_\_\_\_\_

*Table of Contents.* The table of contents is an outline in topical form of the material contained in the report proper. Its function is to give information of the contents, to indicate the main units or divisions, to indicate the page on which the different sections occur, and to show their relative importance. The table of contents serves as an avenue of approach to any desired section of the report.

The form of the table of contents has, like the parts of a letter, been standardized by usage. The chief variations occur in the number of places to which its subdivision is carried or in the manner of demonstrating the relative importance of indented and aligned material by Roman numerals, Arabic numerals, capital letters, small letters, and size of type.

Tables of contents are standard units in reports of greater length than five thousand words. The two tables of contents which follow indicate one of the most usual of the permissible forms for typed or printed reports, and also an interesting variation of the form for printed reports. The first is a table of contents for a typed report on enclosures in direct mail advertising, and the second is a table of contents from the Department of Commerce, *Report on Digest of State Laws Relating to Taxation and Revenue*.

### *Illustration I*

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*Letter of Transmittal.* The letter of transmittal, which observes the ordinary conventions of correspondence, generally makes a contact between author and reader, points out the purpose of the report and the chief aspects of the subject, and indicates methods of development and points of

interest. Since it is introductory in nature, it resembles, somewhat closely in content, the preface of a book. For example:

### LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

#### Committee of Investigation on Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals

---

Office of the Committee,  
Chicago, Nov. 22, 1915.

Mr. Charles L. Deering, President,  
The Chicago Association of Commerce:

Sir:

Your Committee of Investigation on Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals in Chicago has the honor of herewith presenting its final report.

Since its appointment in March, 1911, your committee has given close attention to the subject in hand and has had the benefit of the advice and researches of an able staff of experts.

Having had at its command ample resources and the advice and assistance of such expert counsel as it chose to employ, the committee feels justified in hoping that its report will be of some value in the solution of a difficult civic problem not only in Chicago but elsewhere.

The committee has had no difficulty in obtaining the necessary data from the railroads directly interested and is under many obligations to them and to other organizations and individuals in this country and abroad for valuable assistance and advice.

While the committee's labors have consumed over four years in time, it feels that the importance of the



subject matter of the investigation and the effect in our own city, and in other terminal cities, required it to proceed cautiously and to form conclusions only after thorough investigation and careful consideration.

By Order of the Committee,

JESSE HOLDOM, Chairman.

It is employed in administrative and professional reports where relations between writer and reader are definitely fixed. In independent reports, made for all who may be interested in the subject, the foreword is substituted for the letter of transmittal.

The character of the letter of transmittal depends upon whether or not the responsibility of the author for the report is immediate or remote. When the responsibility is not immediate, the letter of transmittal is nothing more than a concise statement of submission in formal language.

The form is that ordinarily used by government employees in submitting the result of the work of their assistants to their chiefs. For example, "I have the honor to submit, etc." If the report is of an informal nature, it may read: "Having completed my investigation of your problem, as set forth in your letter to me, February 26, 1925, I submit herewith my report on the matter."

If the responsibility for the report is immediate, letters of transmittal reflect the personality of their writers and the character of their subject matter, and are adapted to their reader. They may include the comment of the author on the facts presented, the nature of the investigation, the personnel of those making the investigation, and the significance of the result. Where a project is being considered, emphasis will fall upon the plan proposed. Where an undertaking has been completed, emphasis is placed upon what has been accomplished.

The length of the letter of transmittal depends upon the nature and complexity of the subject matter of the re-

port, the recipient's knowledge of it, and its comprehensiveness. In general, even for long reports, it is limited to two or three pages.

*Epitome.* The epitome, known variously as epitome, summary of report, abstract, or pertinent facts, according to the usage established in different fields of investigation, enables a person who is not interested in reading the report, or who does not have time to read the accumulation of data or the analysis which interprets it, to get quickly and easily a clear conception of the purpose of the investigation, the method of investigation, and its important results. The epitome is by nature a synopsis of the material on which it is based.

One important variation of the epitome is that known as the *Summary*. It is used in elementary types of reports which are accumulations and interpretations of fact. Although it may be confined to one or two pages, it often reaches proportions of twenty to thirty pages. That of the State of New York, *Report of the Special Joint Committee on Taxation and Retrenchment*, March 1, 1922, is two closely typed pages.

*Abstract* is the term applied to the epitome in the highly specialized reports, such as experimental research reports for example. It shares the nature both of an index and an article. Although it is a synopsis of what has been, it is also a recommendation of what ought to be. Its nature and content are indicated by specifications for an abstract of a report in the field of chemistry:

"This section should be a brief abstract of the report, giving a concise idea of the method or methods used, results and yields obtained, not going into minor details and yet bringing out essential points and important results. It is intended to give briefly a clear and complete idea of the important results whether positive or negative in character. Unless the report is of considerable length, the abstract need not occupy more than the first page or two. The purpose of this arrangement is to enable men who are not interested in reading, or who do not have time to read the

detailed experimental data, to get quickly a clear idea of the purpose of the investigation and the actual progress made toward solving the problem. On this account the abstract should never be written until after the rest of the report is completed."

The broken style in which the epitome is sometimes presented is illustrated by that of the report of tests made by Mr. W. T. M. Goss, while Professor of Engineering at Purdue University, on *Vertical Triple Expansion Crank and Fly Wheel Pumping Engine*:

## INDEX

### LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

---

### REPORT:

#### Section I.

A summarized statement of conditions and results.

#### Section II.

A comparison of results of final tests with those of the test of July 8.

#### Section III.

A comparison of the performance of the Snow Engine of the Indianapolis Water Company with that of other well known engines.

#### Section IV.

Complete exhibit of observed and calculated data.

#### Section V.

Water and gas consumption as determined by measurements made in the boiler room.

An outgrowth of the epitome is the double report, consisting of two distinct parts. The first part is for the general reader, and consequently popular in tone and succinct in presentation. The second is for the specialist; it is the accumulation of information and data on which the first report is based. One distinguishing feature of the first part of the double report is its persuasive character. In public reports, it often attempts to persuade readers that a certain undertaking will be advantageous to them; that is, it not only calls attention to sections of importance in the second half of the report, but it also epitomizes them by a series of miniatures of these sections.

The *main* headings of the text are the same as those of the table of contents, and their relative importance is indicated by the use of capitals, italics, black face type, underlining, and spacing.

The chief divisions of the text, known both as the report proper and body of the report are:

1. Introduction: Statement of Aim.
2. Development: Discussion of Main Theme.
3. Conclusion: Summation of Result.

*Index.* An index is a table of references to the main facts and ideas, important words and phrases of the report. It is not usually included in reports of less than ten pages, its presence depending upon the complexity of the material. Its value for reference purposes, however, makes its inclusion highly desirable. It follows ordinarily the form used in books: main headings accentuated by larger type and the sub-headings in smaller type. In many reports, it is merely an extension of the table of contents. The index is prepared by making single entries of main headings on cards usually 3" x 5" and arranging them alphabetically. Subheadings are entered on each card slightly to the right of the main heading. The index cannot, of course, be prepared until references can be made to exact pages in typed manuscript or printed material.

The main elements of a report may be indicated by the outline of a typical report.

I. Preface

Title Page  
Letter of Transmittal  
Table of Contents  
Epitome

II. Text

III. Supplement

Appendix  
Index

The emphasis given to any unit depends upon the function of the report, its material, and the mental attitude of the reader. If the report is for laymen, emphasis must be given to interpretation of data, results, conclusions, and recommendation; if for specialists, to facts.

### Characteristics of Reports.

*Completeness and Pertinence in Selection of Material.* Reports, like letters, should treat the whole subject and nothing but the subject. The reader usually defines the purpose of the report and is quick to recognize content extraneous to that purpose; hence the author of the report should select from the data which he has collected only the facts pertinent to the accomplishment of the purpose. The degree of completeness in the presentation of facts is determined mainly by the knowledge and training of the reader for whom the report is intended. Readers fall roughly into two classes: specialists and general readers. By training and experience, a man may be a specialist in architecture, engineering, chemistry, or business. The number of details necessary for the general reader would be superfluous for the specialist. Just as an article on the subject of bridge

in any magazine usually confines its treatment to the new rules and is unintelligible to a novice; so the report of an engineering project for engineers need not include the elementary considerations which the capitalist who would finance the proposition would require. Always should the choice of material for a report and the degree of completeness be governed by the purpose of the report, and the reader's knowledge of the subject.

*Clearness.* Clearness in the text of reports is dependent upon rhetorical structure, grammatical form in paragraphs and sentences, and command of a specialized vocabulary. Three matters of form particularly affect the clearness: the arrangement of material, the definiteness with which the reader is guided from one section of material to another, and the similarity in form for ideas parallel in function. The arrangement of material depends upon the nature of the subject matter and its familiarity, interest, and importance to the reader. Topics may follow one another in the relationship they bear to each other in time or space, or they may follow logical order: familiarity, interest, and importance.

*Conciseness.* Conciseness, the quality of saying much in few words, is attained, in general, by the same means in reports as in letters. There are certain facts about reports, however, which give conciseness greater significance in them than in letters. Reports are of necessity longer than the usual letter; but their power of sustaining interest depends very much upon their condensation. A vocabulary adapted to the reader is one of the best means of attaining this conciseness, and liberal use of illustration is another. One authority on reports says that a final report is seldom more than one-half of the original report.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that this result can be secured only by long hours of painstaking revision for clearness and conciseness.

*Correctness.* Correctness in reports, as in letters, means accuracy of facts. It means, also, accuracy in matters of

<sup>1</sup> Baker, Ray Palmer, *The Preparation of Reports*, p. 57.



composition and in the mechanics of the report. Both are equally important.

**Presentation of Material.**—The presentation of the material in a report is as important as the data which it contains: the finished product should look well and be conducive to easy and efficient reading. It seems illogical that a person should know where to obtain facts, possess the industry to gather them and the judgment to select them, and then fail to formulate and present them in the most effective form. And usually it is a just conclusion that reports, incomplete, too detailed, biased, or pointless, mirror lack of clear insight and careless compilation on the part of the writer. However, some authors have used forethought and precision in anticipating what facts the person authorizing the report will desire to know and yet have arranged the material illogically, and presented the material inadequately digested. The observance of a few principles of display in report making and resourceful shaping of reports would do much to make them create the impression and accomplish the thing which the author desires. The ultimate effectiveness of a report depends upon how it is written.

**Graphic Elements of the Report.**—Among the most important methods for making presentation successful are: use maps, plans, charts, sketches, diagrams, photographs, blue prints, tabulations, graphs, and figures. They attract attention, convey the message concretely, completely, and quickly, indicate comparisons of gross business, operating expenses, depreciation, taxation, and profit, and illustrate tendencies. For these purposes mere description fails; a picture conveys its message more completely and quickly than writing.

A second principle is: present facts, figures, and exhibits clearly. Each of the various methods of conveying messages has its special advantages and its special difficulties. Statistics are one of the most frequently used devices to illustrate tendencies. They are valuable not only in comparing, but also in recording, in describing, and in predicting.

They indicate progress, retrogression, success, or failure. Statistics are used as the basis of analysis of sales and sales possibilities by districts and periods; as the basis of the analysis of production by departments, and processes; and as the basis of analysis of rapidity of turnover of employees, scale of payment, and labor supply.

We are especially interested in methods of presenting statistics. The interpretation of statistics may be tabular, graphic, or literal. Classification, which in statistical method consists in arranging data into groups according to their common characteristics, precedes tabulations. Tabulation consists in placing classified data into tables—flat surfaces “with breadth not disproportionately small in comparison with length”—which may be read in two dimensions, the items being set opposite the stub (horizontal) and captions (vertical).<sup>1</sup> Tabulation is a condition of analysis. “The purpose of tabulation is to reduce masses of facts to logical order according to the units of measurements in which they are expressed and for the purposes desired.”<sup>2</sup> Their effectiveness may be increased by putting a frame around a group of figures, small or large, to make the group stand out. Comparisons of tabulations, without the frame and in the frame, will illustrate:

#### 1. Tabulation without the frame:

| PRODUCTION |                   |                   |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| DATE       | WEIGHT<br>OF DRUM | G-25<br>DRUM TEST |
| 9-17       | 235               | 9.25"             |
| 9-18       | 211               | 17.75"            |
| 9-19       | 220               | 11.75"            |

<sup>1</sup> The subject of statistics is, however, too large and too intricate to be treated in this chapter. The study may be supplemented by reference to *An Introduction to Statistical Method*, by Seerist, Revised Edition. Macmillan, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> *An Introduction to Statistical Methods*, p. 117.

## 2. Tabulation within the frame:

| PRODUCTION |                   |                   |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| DATE       | WEIGHT<br>OF DRUM | G-25<br>DRUM TEST |
| 9-17       | 235               | 9.25"             |
| 9-18       | 211               | 17.75"            |
| 9-19       | 220               | 11.75"            |

This tabular form is most effective when it follows certain rules:

1. Tables should be numbered consecutively throughout the report to make reference to them easy.
2. Suitable headings should indicate the functions of each table and of each column.
3. All units must be described in terms of recognized standards: feet, gallons, bushels, and dollars.

The tabular form of presenting statistics is the most common method, for it has, in general, all the advantages of orderly arrangement and classification. Of these, all of significance in reports, four seem most important:

1. Tabulation partly compensates for the limitation of the mind in remembering bare figures.
2. It permits visualization of group relation.
3. It makes possible ready comparison between data of like character.
4. It reduces the necessity for repetition of explanatory phrases, headings, and duplicating items.

Statistical diagrams are used to interpret statistics because of their psychological value in throwing into relief and clarifying the meaning inherent in tabulation. Where tabulation is interpretive, diagrams are explanatory and expository. Diagrams are especially valuable in comparing interest rates, amounts of loans, and data in relation to districts, as well as showing relations and sequences.

On the other hand, the use of tabulations presents certain difficulties. While tabulation of facts enables the mind to appreciate magnitude, it does not show the proportional relation between facts nor emphasize the concepts of time, space, and movement. Figures are an uncertain method of comparison because they are abstract. Tabulation only partially meets the demands of visualization.

The pictogram or pictograph is commonly used to emphasize differences in size, quantity, or number. It includes lines or bars, surfaces, and volumes. The superiority of lines over surfaces and volumes in clarifying differences is readily apparent in the following figure:

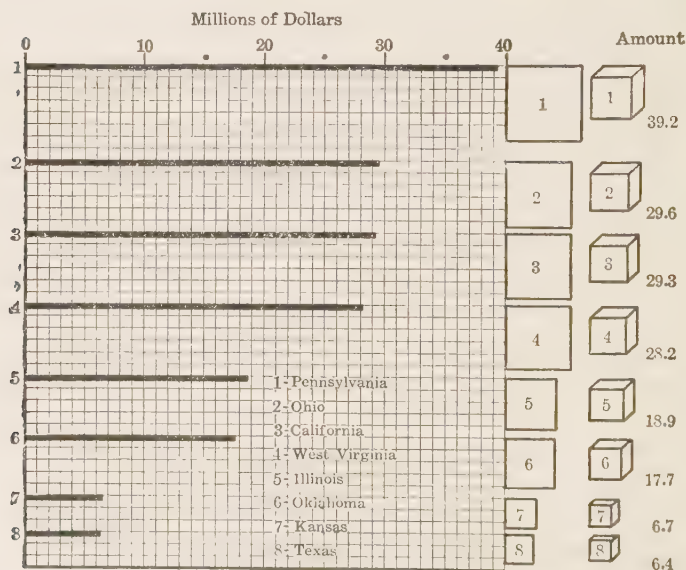


FIG. 12.

(From Secrist's *An Introduction to Statistical Methods*, Revised Edition, copyright 1925, The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.)

Proportional lengths in lines and bars reflect relative magnitudes. But surfaces and volumes involve relations not readily apparent. The dimensions of surfaces vary as the

square root of the surface while those of volumes vary as the cube root of the contents. As a result, experienced people often use illustrations incorrectly proportioned. Even where the proportions are correct, the relative proportions are not easily grasped. In looking at pictures of discs of different sizes, it is difficult to determine whether or not the area of one disc is one-third, one-fourth, or one-fifth the size of the other one. The use of illustrations of bags of different sizes to indicate relative grain production in different areas, and of school houses of different sizes to indicate relative expenditure of money in different districts, is unwise because the plates are likely to show areas drawn out of proportion and thus give an erroneous impression; or if the areas are drawn in proportion, the reader finds difficulty in comparing relative sizes indicated and estimating the degree of difference intended.

The "pie-diagram" is a type of pictogram used to indicate the division of the whole into its component parts. The whole may be area, populations, wealth, income tax returns, crop value, manufactures, motor vehicles, buying power, and number of consumers. It is popular to indicate disposition of the parts of a dollar for taxes, wages, interest, and profits. Its advantage as a method of illustration depends upon how accurately, easily, and clearly it will be read. As compared with the bar method, its superiority is doubtful. Pages must be frequently turned upside down before the legend in a sector is legible; there is a limited space for the legend; for most uses, it is more difficult to compare relative sizes in this manner, as the following diagram indicates.

*The Cartogram* is a map employed to show by means of color scheme or shading, by cross hatching, or dots, the distribution of some kind in a given area. *The Chicago Tribune* in *Book of Facts, 1922*, has made liberal use of cartograms. On one cartogram, different sized dots located in different divisions of the United States indicate where a certain firm's advertising dollars went. On another carto-

gram, dots are used in the same way to indicate where this same firm's orders came from. On another, dots of two colors are used. One color indicates fifty subscribers to the *Tribune* in a given district, while another dot indicates fifty subscribers to the largest paper in a given section. Still another cartogram indicates by means of frequency of dots,

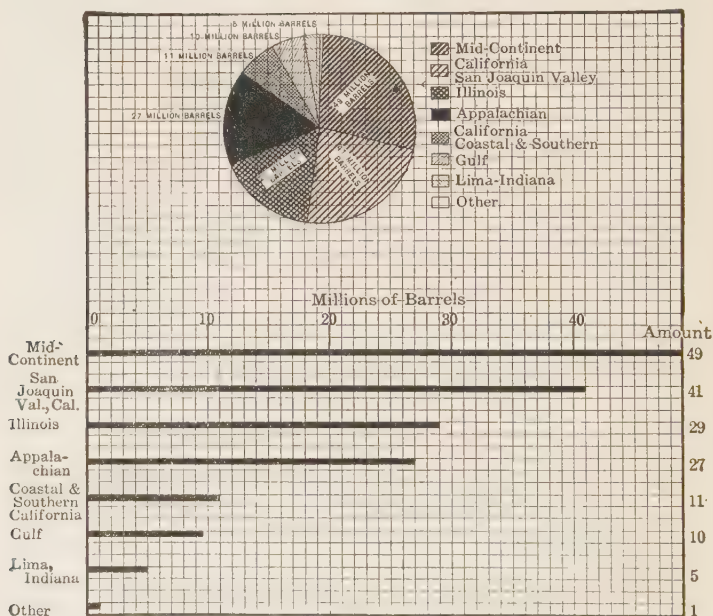


FIG. 13.

(From Secrist's *An Introduction to Statistical Methods*, Revised Edition, copyright 1925, The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission.)

the areas in which the circulation of the *Tribune* is over 25,000, more than 1,000, or less than 1,000.

The chief advantage of the cartogram is that it pictures interrelated conditions, such as frequencies and space.

Statistics tabulated by tabular arrangement are often further interpreted by a graphic chart. The table is primary; it contains the data which may be used in various



## EARNINGS

The figures as below tabulated compare the operating statistics of the Kresge Company reported during the past sixteen years and show the

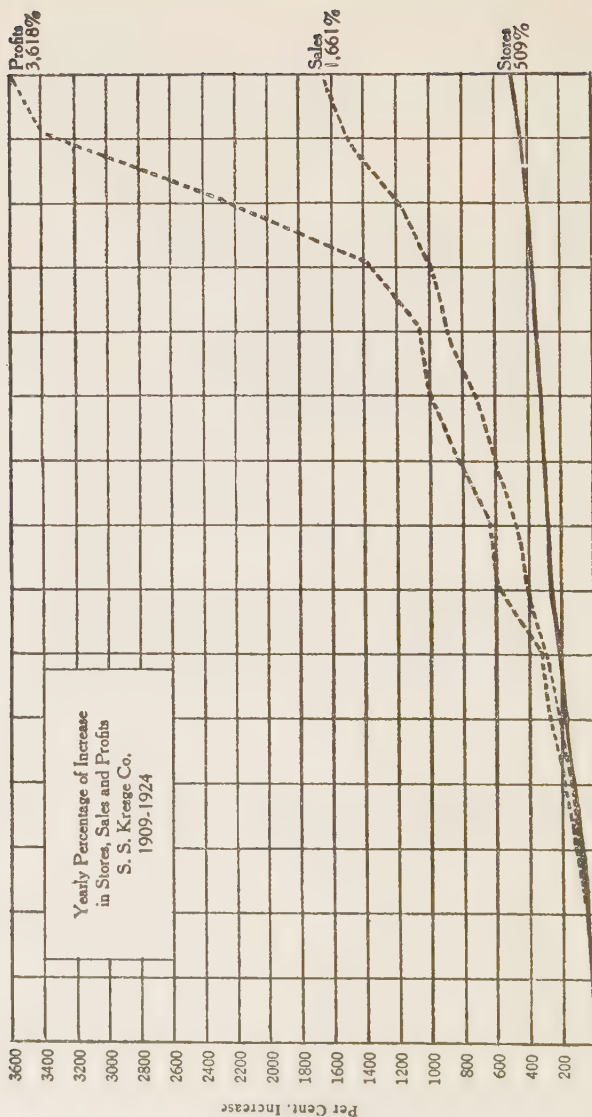
large earning power behind both the preferred and common stock issues.

| Dec 31 | Stores | Gross Sales | Profits<br>Before<br>War Taxes | Per Cent.<br>on<br>Sales | Per Cent.<br>on \$2,000,000<br>Preferred | Per Cent. on Common based<br>on Shares<br>actually<br>outstanding<br>Dec. 31, 1924 |
|--------|--------|-------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1909   | 42     | \$5,116,099 | \$310,993                      | 6.10                     | 15.5                                     | 3.42                                                                               |
| 1910   | 51     | 6,508,752   | 408,957                        | 6.28                     | 20.4                                     | 5.38                                                                               |
| 1911   | 64     | 7,923,064   | 470,866                        | 5.94                     | 23.5                                     | 6.61                                                                               |
| 1912   | 85     | 10,325,487  | 669,179                        | 6.48                     | 33.4                                     | 10.58                                                                              |
| 1913   | 101    | 13,258,227  | 869,686                        | 6.56                     | 43.4                                     | 14.59                                                                              |
| 1914   | 118    | 16,097,393  | 1,150,497                      | 7.15                     | 57.5                                     | 20.20                                                                              |
| 1915   | 140    | 20,943,300  | 1,293,219                      | 6.17                     | 64.6                                     | 23.06                                                                              |
| 1916   | 157    | 26,396,547  | 2,172,348                      | 8.23                     | 108.6                                    | 20.32*                                                                             |
| 1917   | 164    | 30,090,700  | 2,360,988                      | 7.84                     | 118.0                                    | 22.21                                                                              |
| 1918   | 170    | 36,309,513  | 2,950,999                      | 8.13                     | 147.5                                    | 28.11                                                                              |
| 1919   | 176    | 42,668,061  | 3,505,201                      | 8.21                     | 175.2                                    | 33.65                                                                              |
| 1920   | 189    | 51,245,311  | 3,678,506                      | 7.18                     | 183.9                                    | 35.38                                                                              |
| 1921   | 199    | 55,859,010  | 4,627,032                      | 8.28                     | 231.3                                    | 27.85*                                                                             |
| 1922   | 212    | 65,191,467  | 7,576,417                      | 11.62                    | 378.8                                    | 40.78                                                                              |
| 1923   | 233    | 81,843,233  | 10,893,988                     | 13.31                    | 544.6                                    | 43.85                                                                              |
| 1924   | 256    | 90,096,248  | 11,564,163                     | 12.83                    | 578.2                                    | 46.57                                                                              |

\* The decrease in earnings per share from \$23.06 in 1915 to \$20.32 in 1916, and from \$35.38 in 1920 to \$27.85 in 1921, was brought about principally by the declaration of an 80% stock dividend in 1916 and a 54% stock dividend in 1921.

For the purpose of making a fair comparison, no deductions have been made for war taxes in the years 1916 to 1924, inclusive, these taxes being an extraordinary charge. Actual results in recent years with all tax deductions are shown at the top of the following page.

FIG. 14.



|          | 1909  | 1910  | 1911  | 1912   | 1913   | 1914   | 1915   | 1916   | 1917   | 1918   | 1919   | 1920   | 1921   | 1922   | 1923   | 1924   |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Sales*   | 5,116 | 6,508 | 7,923 | 10,825 | 13,258 | 10,007 | 20,943 | 20,398 | 30,090 | 36,309 | 42,668 | 51,245 | 55,859 | 65,191 | 81,843 | 90,096 |
| Profits* | 310   | 408   | 470   | 689    | 869    | 1,150  | 1,293  | 2,172  | 2,360  | 2,950  | 3,505  | 3,678  | 4,627  | 7,576  | 10,893 | 11,564 |
| Stores   | 42    | 51    | 64    | 85     | 101    | 118    | 140    | 157    | 164    | 170    | 176    | 189    | 199    | 212    | 233    | 256    |

FIG. 15.

ways. The graph is a derivation; it presents a picture for specific ends for which the data have been accumulated. To illustrate the uses made of charts, one is given from a financial report of the S. S. Kresge Company. This is easily analyzed, and the table which supplies the data from which the picture was prepared is also given.

Data arranged in systematic order are interpreted graphically by two means:

1. Charts, which picture the amount of frequencies of quantitative or time variables.
2. Sketches.

Since charts are used for no less than ten principal functions and are divisible into ten main classes, some of which, from a general reader's point of view, are very complex in form, they will not be discussed here. Although the general reader may interpret data by plotting curves on coordinate paper, so ruled by hand that the spacing of ruling may suit exactly the data which it is desired to plot, only specialists will have need of a command of the principal kinds of charts treated in *How To Make and Use Graphic Charts* by Allan C. Hashell, New York, 1920, or *Graphic Methods for Presenting Facts*, by Willard C. Brinton, New York, 1914, and treated clearly.

An explanation of the construction of the chart on page 516 will make clear the simplest type of chart.

In Figure 16, we have data available for the years 1909 to 1924 inclusive. Lines are drawn vertically for each decade. The scale need not run above 3,600, for the largest figure to plot is 3,618%. A suitable scale is secured by using one line for each 200 per cent. After the background ruling has been drawn, the figures for each year are laid off to scale on the proper vertical lines to represent successive years, and a dot is placed on each vertical line at the vertical distance, to represent the data according to the scale

chosen. Thus the figure 13, 258 would be indicated on the vertical line for 1913 where the horizontal scale for 200% crosses the chart. After the dots for the year indicating a 200% increase have been placed on vertical lines, the dots are joined with a dotted heavy line and a curve appears.

The curve is drawn from the data given in the tabulations and registers concretely the changes from year to year, which the figures give abstractly. The curve shows at once

| Millions<br>of<br>Dollars | 134  | 222 | 318 | 687 | 829 | 1504 | 1647 | 2244 |
|---------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| 2220                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 2000                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 1800                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 1600                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 1400                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 1200                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 1000                      |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 800                       |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 600                       |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 400                       |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 200                       |      |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |
| 0                         | 1830 | '40 | '50 | '60 | '70 | '80  | '90  | 1900 |

FIG. 16.

that gains began to increase more rapidly in 1921 although the figures do not make this fact so apparent. In plotting curves, the vertical scale should, if possible, be chosen so that the zero of the scale appears on the chart. Otherwise, the reader of the chart may assume the bottom of the chart to be zero and so be grossly misled. Zero should always be indicated by a broad line under the ordinary coördinate line used for the background of the chart.

A summation of a few of the principles for using illustrations of various kinds will help one to make the text clear and easily read:

1. Diagrams to be serviceable must be easily read.
2. The appeal made to the eye should not be different from that made to the intellect, but rather should intensify the latter.
3. The concrete data which illustrations interpret should always be given, not only for record but as a means by which the accuracy of the illustration may be tested.
4. Complexity of detail in a single diagram should be avoided since it results in confusion and defeats the function of the diagram.
5. Lines and bars should be used in illustrating statistical facts, for they render concrete those relations and sequences which in tabular form remain abstract.
6. The combination of the abstract quantity and pictorial illustrations of interpretation should be employed because it increases the intensity with which an idea is perceived.
7. Graphs, drawings, photostats, and tables must be placed where they will be most convenient and clear. Wherever the illustration is of a specific nature, it should follow the page on the report where it is mentioned.
8. All graphs, tables, and charts should bear numbers so that reference will be simple.
9. Illustrations should always be as compact as possible for completeness and readability.

**Preparing the Manuscript.**—The author of a report who studies carefully the ways and means of making reports inviting and clear as well as correct in appearance and make-up will greatly improve the value of his work. To accomplish this end, he provides himself with plain white paper of good quality, carbon paper, and special sheets 11 x 13 used for folded tables, often a plain manila folder 8½ x 11 (if the report is to be bound at the side), clips, a type-writer with clean type, and a fresh ribbon. Formerly, it was customary to use foolscap for reports, but the requirements of the modern standard file have almost put an end to this practice.

- I. Object: To advise the procedure for securing a mailing list of out of town investors for R. B. Carter & Company, investment brokers of Chicago, Illinois.
- II. Recommendation: The sources given herein are merely methods of securing names for the mailing list. They must be culled to suit the needs of the particular investment.  
  
Consideration must be given to the fact that many of the prospects are solicited by other investment houses, and in some cases personal interviews are made by salesmen. The series of letters must be planned with this consideration.
- III. Reference: Sales Promotion By Mail, Chapter I. Personal Observations.
- IV. Tax Lists: The largest single source of names for a mailing list is from tax lists.
- A. Income Tax List: The income tax list is obtainable from the Federal Government. There are two types of investors included in this list.
  - 1. Large Taxpayer: The investor with a large income who generally lives in cities. He is usually solicited by representatives of resident investment houses or investment house branches. The low return from this type of prospect would make the list too expensive to be profitable.
  - 2. Small Taxpayer: Prospects with a more moderate income and more particularly those not living in cities are excellent prospects for a mailing list. Their business would, etc.

Illustrates arrangement when pages are bound at the side.



Object of the report: The object of this report is to show clearly the working of the one organ of a large business house engaged in the meat packing industry. This report is to show Contents: the scope of work of every member of this organ and how their work dovetails with that of every other member in the department.

Material used: This report is to explain, by relating the work of the Purchasing Department of Armour and Company, Union Stock Yards, Chicago, Illinois. It is hoped that if the Material gathered for: system used by Armour and Company completely satisfies the owners and the members of the Board of Control of the Brennan Packing Company of Denver, Colorado, that they will install such a system in their general offices in Denver.

Requested by: This report was requested by Mr. Copp, president of the Brennan Packing Company with the idea that this system, the one used by Armour, was one of the best and most completely organized purchasing organs of any company in the country, and operated with a far greater degree of success than any other similar department.

Illustrates arrangement when bound at the top.

He will study the subject of display and arrangement, and he will find display concerned particularly with arrangement of pages, margins, spaces, headings, and table. In general, the principles which govern display are the same as those which govern advertising copy. He must focus attention on certain main points and give maximum effectiveness to concise messages through presentation. Advertisers use head-lines at the top of their advertisements, in the middle, and elsewhere. They use pictures, arrows, line-borders, type-groups, and white space with the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of their advertisements. The author of reports will do well to make use of every mechanical device at his command to focus attention to suitable display and neatness in the cover, title page, and the other elements of the preface, for these make the first impression on the reader of the report, and by means of these he is favorably or unfavorably disposed to its contents. Examples of the arrangement of report pages are given on pages 518 and 519.

In conclusion, the summary of a few generalizations in regard to mechanical details may help the author of reports to improve his display of them:

1. Material poorly balanced on a sheet is a handicap to a report.
2. The proper use of white space will invite perusal.
3. The margin at the right of the title page and text of the report should never be less than one inch, the margin at the left, never less than one and one-half inches; it is usually two inches. The greater margin at the left allows for binding.
4. There should always be a little more white space at the bottom than at the top of a report to make the material look well centered. The margin at the top should never be less than one inch; that at the bottom, never less than one and one-fourth inches. Margins of quotations are wider than those of text material.

5. The width of margins is to be determined mainly by the amount of reading matter, and the eye should be trained to judge what is good or bad.
6. Main divisions of a report are indicated by center heads or subtitles placed in the margin. Subtitles are placed in the margin of a report to increase the readability of the report and to expedite reference for the busy reader. Main heads and subheads should, therefore, be spaced to stand out from the body.
7. The titles and subtitles appearing in the margin of a report should be numbered in the customary way to show their relation to each other. Numbering facilitates reference to specific parts of the reports.
8. Individual paragraphs should not be numbered, however, because demarkation of subdivisions to the fourth or fifth place confuses rather than aids the reader in seeing the relation of parts.
9. The main titles should be in capitals; subheadings should be in small letters with principal words, only, capitalized, as shown in the example of an arrangement of a report on page 518.
10. Practice differs as to the use of single spacing and double spacing of reports. The advantage of single spacing is that it permits twice the amount of material used in double spacing. It often permits illustrations, such as tables and graphs, to appear on the same page as the text. Its disadvantage is that it does not indicate clearly the difference between original and quoted material.
11. The paragraphing is governed partially by the principle of rhetorical unity and partially by the appearance. Reports should never contain long, heavy, dull looking, hard-to-read paragraphs. In this respect, they follow the earliest principle of paragraphing—that is, to rest the eye and to facilitate reading. Too many short paragraphs, however, suggest a light and superficial treatment of a subject and make reading choppy. The same principles of display which govern the title page, the table of contents, the body of the reports, and para-

graphs, govern the display of material within the paragraph.

12. Quotations, if worthy of being emphasized, are indented and surrounded with white space.
13. Do not roll or fold the report.

# APPENDIX I

## EXERCISES AND PROBLEMS

Chapter I emphasizes the necessity of practice in learning to write. The following problems provide the kind of practice material necessary in learning to write business letters. They have, for the most part, been taken directly from the letter files of business firms. To make them more useful, the author has classified them so that their solution applies the theory prescribed in the various chapters with which they are correlated.

The student will not solve these problems successfully unless he uses his imagination to make the people and the firms mentioned in them real.

From the business situations outlined, he will learn to select the factors which constitute the actual letter problem, and the details which are necessary to its successful solution. A student should not think his letter good unless he has observed good business practice and used good English.

### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER I

1. Concretely, what is the meaning of "learning to write"?
2. When will you know when you have begun to learn how to write?
3. Enumerate and explain the steps in learning to write.
4. Why is it important that you learn to write?
5. Where should you begin to learn to write?

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER I

1. Write a letter inducing a person to come to college and to take a course in business correspondence.
2. You have just lately arrived in California, and you like it so well there that you feel that your summer would be complete if you could induce your roommate at college to come out and be with you. You are planning to tour the state in an old "flivver." Write the letter.

3. Select an article out of the *Saturday Evening Post* in which you are interested. Write that firm asking them if their product is suitable for some supposed use which you might make of it. Ask them to send you literature describing their product, and its uses, and give them some detail in your request which will necessitate their giving your letter a personal answer. Request that no salesman be sent.

4. Write to the head of the correspondence department of a mail-order house making application for a position as sales correspondent and emphasizing your ability to write clearly, persuasively, and easily; your knowledge of merchandise; and your knowledge of people who live in small towns. You know how to type and how to use a dictaphone. Make the appearance of your letter reflect the quality of your typing and your command of English.

5. Answer the following letter which you have received from one of your high school classmates:

Dear Ned,

As a friend, I know that I can come to you for advice and receive a frank and candid answer.

Would you advise me to go to your college and get a business training, or would you advise me to go directly into business now?

Knowing that you had to make the same decision upon your graduation from high school, I should like to know what reasons prompted you to come to your conclusion.

Expecting to hear from you soon, I am

Your friend,

JACK BANSETT.

6. Assume that you are the correspondent in charge of the dealer-help department of the McDeering Farm Machinery Manufacturing Company. Write a letter to farmers telling them that Mr. Blank in their nearby town is the official dealer for McDeering farm machinery. Assuming that the farmers are sold on McDeering quality, bring out the idea that Mr. Blank, your official agent, is there ready to supply them with McDeer-



ing products and to give McDeering service on parts, and repairs, and advice on how to make the machinery give satisfaction and long service.

### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER II

1. What two points of view do business houses hold concerning the place of business letters in the conduct of their business?
2. Why is it necessary that all business letters of a business house be sales letters?
3. Can postal receipts be taken as an index to the conditions of trade in a country? Why?
4. What are the functions of business letters?
5. What is the nature of business letters?
6. Define a better business letter.
7. What is the scope of business letters?
8. What questions should you ask yourself before writing a business letter?
9. What is the importance of the business letter?
10. What are some of the modern tendencies of business letters?

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER II

1. You are the sales manager of the Blank Rug Company, of Blankville, Indiana. By chance you have found the following answer to a request going out over your company's signature to a man whose business is just beginning to pay you a good profit.

My dear Mr. Blank:

We cannot grant your request for 500 yards of Number 10 carpet at the old price. Owing to conditions beyond our control the cost of manufacture has increased. This means that the price must be advanced to you or we lose money.

Hoping that you see your way clear to accept the carpet at the advanced price, we are

Yours very cordially,

BLANK RUG COMPANY

Assume the following facts when you answer: The merchant has suggested that he can get as good a rug for less from another firm. You know that he will accept an inferior quality if he buys elsewhere. Show him that in the long run your rug at the advanced price is more economical. Talk quality in relation to price. Also make clear that you delayed advance in price while the prices of raw materials were soaring hoping that they might drop, but that now a price raise is inevitable.

2. You are a tire manufacturer, and you receive a request for prices of your tires from Mr. Blank in Blanktown, Pennsylvania. You have been waiting to place an agency in this town, and you think of the inquirer as a possible dealer. You do not wish, however, to offer him an agency without first seeing him.

Write him, telling him that you are thinking of establishing an agency in his town, and that you are sending a salesman to see him. Try to build a sales-acceptance of an agency by choosing talking points about your tires adapted to a prospective dealer rather than to a user. On the other hand, safe-guard yourself in case you should find him unsuited to become one of your dealers.

3. Rewrite the following letter for salesmanship. Keep in mind that the man to whom the letter is written is a carpenter earning \$40 a week. This is his first offense.

My dear Mr. Smith:

Your action in borrowing \$40 from the school-board for whom you are erecting our building, has embarrassed us very much. We do not do business that way. A wire from you that you were short of funds would have brought you money by telegram. Don't let this sort of thing occur again.

Yours truly,

4. Assume that you are in the sales correspondence unit of a mail-order house, and that a woman has used an old catalogue in ordering a Wilton Kitchen Cabinet. She encloses a draft for fifty dollars. Write to her informing her that she has used an old catalogue. Attempt to induce her to accept the same kitchen cabinet at \$60. Send her a new catalogue and give her the page number of the \$60 kitchen cabinet. Tell her that you are holding her draft until you hear from her.

## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER III

1. Why is a knowledge of human nature imperative to every business correspondent?
2. Is it easy to make the reader of a business letter get the meaning intended by the writer? Why?
3. What is the first requisite of the business correspondent?
4. Why is it necessary that the business correspondent have a good, if not a thorough, knowledge of business practice?
5. What must the correspondent be besides a writer?
6. Why is it important that a business correspondent have and display good character and pleasing personality in his letters?
7. What elements of English are essential in the business letter?
8. Define good English in reference to business letters.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER III

1. The following letter is written to a man who has seen your product advertised in a magazine:

Dear Sir:

We are sorry to inform you that in fairness to our dealers we do not sell Blank Products direct to the consumer. However, you may purchase this equipment from one of our dealers of which we have several in your town.

Hoping that you appreciate our position, we are

Yours very truly,

BLANK PRODUCTS COMPANY.

Turn through a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and find an advertisement for an article that might have been the one inquired about in the above case. Use the data given in the advertisement to rewrite the above letter so that it will sell your product to the inquirer instead of destroy his interest as the present letter is likely to do. Give specifically the name of the dealer or dealers where he may buy your product in his home town.

2. Rewrite the adjustment letter concerning the patent

leather oxfords quoted in the text on pages 42-43. Make it good in composition. Tell the customer what you can do for him and *why* rather than *what* you cannot do for him. Write sincerely and naturally. Avoid a trite opening and ending.

3. Page 334 of the text gives the following collection letter:

Dear Sir:

We believe that having the use of the watch for two years is sufficient service from this grade of watch without having repairs made.

Furthermore, the watch does not show any defects in workmanship or material, but misuse. The balance spring and jewels have been broken, but with ordinary use these parts do not break, as they are very well protected.

We shall, however, allow for the cleaning of the works, which will lessen the charges \$2. If you will send check for the balance, we shall start immediately on the repairs.

We guarantee your watch to keep accurate time.

Yours very truly,

The dictator might as well have written:

Dear Sir:

You are unreasonable; furthermore, you are either ignorant or dishonest.

The proof of what I say is that you have misused the watch and expect us to make up for its abuse. However, we have condescended to allow for the cleaning of the watch. We shall start work as soon as you pay for the repairs.

We renew our guarantee (which has not meant anything to you in this present transaction).

Yours very truly,

Realizing the impression created by the first letter as illustrated by the above paraphrase, rewrite the letter using your

knowledge of human nature to make the tone of the letter build good-will and to make the adjustment satisfactory.

4. Rewrite the following letter to improve the English:

Dear Mr. Customer:

No doubt you have expected to see me up to this time, wish to call your attention on account of being extremely busy in getting my place ready, my time has been well taken up, while I had a Grand Opening last week of my Stationery Department, and remembered my old friends with a little souvenir with compliments of my concern, and under separate cover, I am mailing to you a package, and assure you, you will find the same very useful.

In the meantime, if we are able to be of any service to you, don't hesitate and let us know your requirements, and we assure you satisfaction as heretofore, and remain with the writer's kindest regards.

Very truly yours,

#### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER IV

##### *Mechanical Make-up of Business Letters*

1. Rewrite the following letter, correcting its mechanical make-up. Address the envelope for it. Place a return card on the envelope. Fold the letter sheet and put it into the envelope. Use plain white unruled paper for the work. The envelope should be of business size. All work should be typewritten:

Johnston, Illinois

10/6/24

Mrs. H. F Jones

Pontolusock mich.

Madam—

Your order has been rec'd. and we thank you.  
We will ship at once.

Thanking you again we beg to remain

Yours—

Jumbo Co.

M.N.A.

2. Assume that you are a stenographer taking dictation. The following letter-elements with the body of the letter omitted are dictated to you. Place the elements of the letter in their proper position on a sheet of 8½" by 11" paper. Capitalize and punctuate parts correctly:

(a) 1422 jackson ave detroit mich november 16 1924 dr john n wiseacre consulting surgeon mercy hospital 116 n race st chicago ill dear doctor wiseacre yours respectfully n n trousant divisional surgeon illinois central rr

(b) plymouth miss january 10 1925 mr james rainey wilson 243 drexel drive memphis tenn my dear mr wilson cordially yours miss julian r peisette

(c) july 23 1925 erickson minn mr o n giddings r f d number 7 st petersburg fla my dear friend yours for business blue sky co per j a sackett mgr sales department jas:ay enclos.

(d) suite 99 denver and rio grande rr divisional office 7/19/26 the american steel corp main office dary ind attention mr johnson chief purchasing agent my dear mr johnson yours most truly a n murphy divisional supt j r newcomb private secretary

3. Correct the mechanical make-up of the following letter:

Jan. tenth  
Cairo, W. Va.

The Fronson Oil Co.  
Mr. Sam Busted Pres. & Gen'l Mgr.  
1249 Houston Blvd.  
Charleston, S. C.

Gents;—

We want to inquire if our Mr. Sanding has called on you as yet demonstrating our new seamless steel oil drum containers?

Enclosed you will find some literature on this new container. We feel quite sure that you will be pleased to see this drum which is proving to be one of the most distinct advances in the handling of fuel oil that has been made in the last decade.

Yours Very Truly  
Goodwin Tank Co.  
Per

Rice N. Gaston, Sales Mgr.



4. Assume that you are the correspondence supervisor for a mail-order house, a factory, or a department store. Write a letter to the correspondents of your firm embodying the instructions on mechanical make-up which you wish used to bring about a standardized-letter form for the correspondence of your firm. Make your own letter a model for them to follow.

Before writing the letter, on a separate sheet of paper give a paragraph describing the type and class of your customers and prospects, size of town, and wealth of the surrounding country (if you choose a department store), and the type of your product (necessity, luxury, or merely something desirable).

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER V

#### *Selling Qualities of the Business Letter*

1. You are the new Assistant Credit Manager of the Goodstone Tire Company. The following is a form letter that is being used by your firm requesting credit information from a person who has applied for credit. Rewrite the letter with a definite "you attitude" instead of the present "we attitude" phrasing. Make the man feel your appreciation of his application for credit and your ability to serve him well. This will make him anxious to give you the credit information which you request. Give such explanation of your credit policy as will show him that it is motivated by the customer's as well as the firm's interest:

Dear Sir:

We have noticed the contract and the order you recently gave our Mr. Flint, but as we have not had any dealings with you in the past and have never looked into your affairs at any time, we are hardly in position to extend you open account terms.

We are enclosing a financial and property statement blank and would like to have you fill it in and return it promptly so that we may arrange for a line of credit if at all possible.

In the event that you require quick shipment, perhaps you would permit us to make shipment on cash terms. Please let us know.

2. As Assistant Correspondence Manager of Taylor, Graham, Ward & Company, you receive the following order letter for a boat propeller from a river fisherman who has done business with your firm before:

Dere sir—

I want a propeller for my boat you know me so I aint sending the money because i don't no what it will cost me

John Brant

The man is honest and will pay. However, as the order is very inexplicit, and you don't know how large a propeller he wants, write a letter thanking him for the order and explaining to him that you cannot fill his order satisfactorily unless he tells you how large a propeller he wishes, the number of blades, style, etc. Adapt the letter to the man, personalize it, and make it a sales letter.

3. Rewrite the following letter: Modify the statements made. Take away its "showy" tone. Remember, however, that the shoe store sending out the letter is a chain store and caters to the lower class of people. With this in mind, select the appeal which you will use:

Dear Sir:

THE MOST ASTOUNDING SHOE VALUES ON EARTH!!!

Our shoes are undoubtedly the most wonderful shoes ever put on the market. At dirt cheap prices, too. Will wear you three times as long as any other shoes you have ever bought.

This is the most startling, price-cutting, big value sale that we have ever put on.

The Very Latest Styles!  
Longest Wearing!  
The Best Looking!  
The Lowest Prices!

What else could your heart desire? Come in and visit our mammoth, cost sale.

Yours for bargains,  
Advance Shoe Stores.

4. The beginning of the following letter gives one dominant idea which would arouse a vital interest in the mind of a sheet metal contractor:

Gentlemen:

Time has proved that Armco Ingot Iron will last, but have you proved to yourself how easy working it is? <sup>1</sup>

Keeping in mind the effectiveness of the above beginning, write effective beginnings of letters selling:

- a. A Fordson tractor to a farmer;
- b. Dental drills to a dentist;
- c. Marquette cement to a hard road contractor;
- d. Goodyear Heavy Duty Bus tires to the operator of an intercity bus line;
- e. Sanford "Koal-Black" typewriter ribbons to a stenographer.

5. Rewrite the beginnings of the following letters, which at present antagonize the reader, so that such an atmosphere of good feeling is created that the reader will read the remainder of the letter with an attitude of open-mindedness:

a. Dear Sir:

We believe that having the use of the electric iron for two years is sufficient service from this grade of iron without having repairs made.

b. Dear Sir:

We think you are unfair to expect us to replace the roller on your typewriter as you have had it five years now and rubber won't stay soft-surfaced forever!

6. Rewrite the following sentences to give the positive pleasant aspect:

- a. Knowing these facts, we hope that you see our guarantee cannot hold.
- b. To avoid trouble, we ask that you take special care to follow the directions carefully.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from Letter Bulletin of the American Rolling Mill Co.

- c. We dislike doing so, but we cannot send your order until you write us concerning the grade of "Red Eye" Salmon you desire.
- d. We are sorry to say that we cannot send your goods on the day specified because of rushed conditions in our factory.

7. Give the following collection letter such a tone of confidence that the tone will help collect the bill:

The Debtor Company,  
Business Center, Georgia.

Gentlemen:

It is rather discouraging to observe that the amount, \$25.89, under your name, represents the first transaction we have enjoyed with your establishment. The sale was made under terms "2 per cent ten days, net 30."

Perhaps you have not stopped to consider that when one man engages another to perform a service or deliver a commodity, he enters into a contract. If business is to be sound, that contract must be held sacred by both parties as far as personal responsibility can go.

In view of our having written you previously, we are most confident that this letter will not remain unanswered, even if for some reason unknown to us you find it impossible to pay.

Yours very truly,  
THE CREDITOR COMPANY.  
(Signed)

8. You are the manager of the Gunard Line Steamship Company operating steamships between the United States and Europe. As manager, it is your duty to receive requests for passage by mail and to make stateroom assignments. Answer the following letter giving the man the reservations he wants, acknowledging your error, and at the same time seeking to regain the man's good-will toward your company.

June 12, 1924.

Mr. R. K. Jackson, Manager,  
Gunard Line Steamship Company,  
New York City.

Dear Sir:

You certainly have made an awful mistake. You have given me passage on the Lanfastria which sails for Liverpool on the 29th of this month. In my letter of the 6th, I asked for passage on the Francastria which sails on the 22nd of this month.

Unless I get passage on the Francastria, I shall arrive in England too late to put through a certain business deal. Such a delay will cost me thousands of dollars.

I want to see some snappy action out of you blundering idiots.

Yours truly,

J. WARREN CRAIG III.

#### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER VI

##### *Essential Qualities of Business Letters*

1. Redraft the following letter to make it concise. Do not make it choppy and jerky, however.

Gentlemen:

In reply to your letter of March 12, we have been expecting to receive the padlock from you since the arrival of your letter, but as it has not yet reached us, kindly trace the shipment in order to hasten delivery, and immediately upon receipt of it we will give your order our very best attention.

Yours very sincerely,

BULLDOG PADLOCK COMPANY.

2. Make the following message clear and give it character:

Dean, W. Va.

July 14, 1920.

Dear Sir:

Some time ago I sent to you for some goods. You wrote and told me that you shipped this stuff a long time ago; so now please

either send the stuff or return the money I paid for the stuff, and I want it or my money back, and let me hear from you soon.

Yours Truly,

Lawrence Hackett

3. Rewrite the following passage for courtesy, clearness, and conciseness:

Mr. Blank directed me to advise you that after giving the matter to which you referred his undivided attention for some time, he feels that neither of our firms is to blame as things now stand, in the above matter. He believes that it is such a matter as occasionally comes up in the intercourse between firms, even the best regulated firms, such as yours and ours, and he is willing to let "bygones be bygones" as he said, and not refer to the matter again, but if you feel that we are to blame, he is willing to defend his position and show you where you are at fault, because, as he says, he believes that if anyone is at fault, although he does not think they are in this case, that you are the one.<sup>1</sup>

4. Rewrite the following letter so as to attain correctness and a courteous tone. Make it a letter that will bring action as well:

Loogootee, Indiana,  
July 29, 1920.

Gentlemen:

Sometime in April 1920 I sent to you for a tub up to the present date, i have not received it. You can't expect me to wait a year for an article and besides you have had my money all of this time. What are you trying to do, beat me out of it! I want the tub or the money right away. I needed the tub, or I wouldn't have sent for it.

Mrs. C. T. Rodison  
R-3 Box 64

<sup>1</sup>Quoted from Letter Bulletin of American Rolling Mill Co.



5. Rewrite the following letter for correctness:

Chicago, Illinois  
Friday, 1925

Mr. J. Barned & Company  
Pontoosuck, Michigan.

Dear sirs:—

We have received your order and thank you for same. Beg to advise that we will ship same soon. Will Appreciate any other orders you send. Hoping we will hear from you soon, and with best regards, I remain,—

Yours Truly

Sailson Mfg. Co.  
by H. H. R.

6. Write a letter reflecting your own personality to an author friend of yours who has sent you as a gift an autographed copy of his latest novel.

7. You are Vice President and General Manager of the Hall, Stewart, and Burt Bond House, an investment house of many years' standing and a house that stands back of its judgments and advices to its clients. Mr. J. A. Burnett, who has recently bought \$100,000 worth of bonds from you, writes a letter in which he seems to doubt the reliability of your house and the value of the bonds which you sold him.

Write a letter that will reflect the character of your house and convince him that your bond house is as reliable as you have represented.

8. Rewrite the following letter giving it a definite "you attitude" phrasing:

Dear Sir:

We still await the payment of your bill of March 28th for \$36.10. We need the money and want it as soon as possible. We are losing money by having this bill remain unpaid.

We feel that it is only just that you should pay us.

Yours truly,  
Pitzner Products Co.

9. You are the correspondence manager for a department store which has a very definite policy of not allowing party dresses or other delicate wearing apparel to be sent on approval, because it has sometimes happened that such articles have been worn once or twice and then returned with their saleability impaired. One of your regular customers living out of town, sends you a little note asking you to send a certain party dress out to her home on approval.

Write a courteous letter refusing to send her the dress on approval. At the same time strive to hold her good-will and make the sale.

### EXERCISES AND PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER VII

#### *Analyzing Factors in the Selling Problem*

1. You are the newly appointed manager of the newly created Export Department of the Samson Tractor Manufacturing Corporation. Your company is especially anxious to introduce their tractor into Argentina for use in the immense wheat fields. The Samson tractor is of the Caterpillar type and is especially suited for the continuous and heavy work of the wheat farms. Its kerosene consumption is low; it is easy to operate; and it is a boast of your company that the tractor is practically "foolproof." The Samson has a very low upkeep expense.

Assuming that you have decided to send a few test letters directly to the wheat farmers to see if they are interested:

- (1) Where would you get your mailing list?
- (2) How would you obtain personal information about your prospects?
- (3) How from this information could you determine what selling appeals to use in writing to them?
- (4) Would you make your appeal on economy of time, money, or efforts; on improvement of product, æsthetic sense, or what?
- (5) Would you use a combination of appeals?
- (6) Write the test letter.

2. You are a traveling salesman for the Harmco Sheet Metal Manufacturers of Green Island, Illinois. You work one day

every two weeks in the business office of your company sending out personalized messages to different groups of your customers, saying that you will call. You keep for each customer the following type of data card:

| <i>Data Card</i>                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name—Richard M. Steele                                                                                                                                                |
| Firm—Amalgamated Sheet Metal Products Co.                                                                                                                             |
| Town—Lomax. County—Hancock. State—Illinois                                                                                                                            |
| Position—President and Purchasing Agent                                                                                                                               |
| Age—46. Height—6 ft. Weight—180 lbs.                                                                                                                                  |
| Disposition—Good fellow. Jolly                                                                                                                                        |
| Miscellaneous Data—                                                                                                                                                   |
| Married. Two children. Rotarian. Drives a Packard. Had a son killed in the War. A driver of bargains, but a congenial man to deal with. Likes new ideas. Progressive. |

Your company has just perfected a new type of sheet metal that is positively rust-proof, and is not rough like the old-fashioned galvanized sheet metal. The new sheet metal will work up better than the old, is stronger, more sightly, and two years of experimenting has proved that it will wear 38% longer than the sheet metal now on the market. To "cap it all," your price is 13c per running foot, for your new product, just the same as the present price on the old stock.

Write Mr. Steele a personal message announcing your new product and saying that you will call on him at 9:30, Monday, February 16. Use any of the facts on the above data card needed to personalize the message. Keep in mind that your relation does not justify intimacy.

4. Choose a product about which you already know a fact with dramatic or news interest; or find in a newspaper or magazine a fact which is news. Embody this in a letter to be used in direct by mail advertising for the product.

5. Take some product of every-day use, —coffee, tea, spices, rubber, silk,—and use your imagination to find material for a form letter about the product to be used in direct by mail advertising.

## EXERCISES AND PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER VIII

1. a. What are the successive impressions which the author of the following letter makes in his letter?
- b. What was the final impression he wished to make?
- c. By what message and what tone could he hope to produce this impression?
- d. What are the minimum number of paragraphs needed to produce the desired impression?

Mr. Jackson Race,  
Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Dear Sir:

Mr. Bronson ordered me to answer your request for 60 advertising signs. I don't know much about the way the company regulates this business, but, personally, it seems to me that you are expecting more than the business done in the past with us would warrant.

These signs are expensive, and as we are not allowed to charge you for them, we have to be very careful of the number the dealers get. No offense intended, for this does not refer to such good dealers as you, but some dealers trade on the good-will gained by the use of our signs and then buy their material elsewhere.

For this reason, I am compelled to reduce your allowance to twenty signs. These are being rushed forward to you today. May we assure you that we appreciate your business, and will guarantee you the same courteous, efficient service at all times.

Write the minimum number of sentences necessary to develop the thought.

With the desired impression in view, develop these sentences into a letter.

2. Analyze the long letter to the architect reprinted on pages 144-147 to determine: the response its writer wished to get, its main message, and a suitable tone.

- a. Write down the series of questions you asked yourself while making this analysis.

- b. Make a plan for the letter even though it be nothing more than a series of topic sentences.
- c. Rewrite the letter to effect the desired response and make it a one-page letter.
3. Study especially contact, conviction, permission and clincher in the following letter:

Good-Morning, Teacher!

Have you ever used LOOSELEAF?—Why not give yourself a present?—something useful—something lasting—a real personal pocket companion to make your day's work easier.

SIX MEMO BOOKS IN ONE—THE LOOSELEAF CLASS  
JOTTER

We have a new especially designed Jotter for Teachers, and have combined under one cover the following divisions:

- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Class Record Book | 4. Personal Memo Book     |
| 2. Data Book         | 5. Personal Expense Book  |
| 3. Address Book      | 6. Class Schedule & Diary |

And facts about Note-Taking

PRICE COMPLETE WITH  $\frac{1}{4}$ " RING FABRIKOID BINDER  
\$1.00 POSTPAID

Our fifteen years of fair dealing in Pocket Note-Book systems has earned LOOSELEAF an enviable reputation, and we'll stake this on our ability to make your work easier through the use of LOOSELEAF CLASS JOTTER--or--TO REFUND YOUR MONEY IF YOU ARE DISSATISFIED WITH YOUR PURCHASE!

We shall be happy if this book fills a place in your daily work and gratified if you decide to place your order with us.

Very sincerely yours,

LOOSELEAF, Inc.

The writer has hit upon what self-interest of the reader to get his attention?

The writer tells the reader that the LOOSELEAF Class Jotter will solve what problem for him?

What proof has the writer offered in support of his statement?

Has the writer made it possible and easy for the reader to act?

After definitely deciding how to attain contact, interest, conviction, and a clincher, write a sales letter to teachers or to students to sell your favorite Eversharp pencil, a fountain pen, a pocket memorandum, a brief case, or any of the articles used daily in college work.

4. Make a plan of the different sales steps and write a sales letter for any article costing less than ten dollars which is especially adapted to save time, lighten work, or relieve tediousness. For example: adding machines selling for less than \$5 will appeal to students of accountancy.

5. Make a plan of the different sales steps and write a sales letter in narrative form in which you tell Mr. A, a shoe manufacturer, what economy Mr. E has effected by buying pasteboard boxes from you instead of manufacturing them himself. Your object is to induce Mr. A to tell your salesman to call.

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER IX

#### *Methods of Influencing Thought, Feeling, and Action*

1. You are the direct by mail salesman for the Blank Company of New York which has just assumed a big issue of bonds: Dutch East Indies 30-year External Sinking Fund  $5\frac{1}{2}\%$  Gold Bonds. The pertinent facts are: Due 1953 at 90. Will yield over  $6.24\%$  to maturity and  $6.90\%$  to earliest redemption date. They are direct external American Dollar obligations and are authorized by law of the Kingdom of Netherlands. The popularity of these bonds is shown by the fact that in London £5,000,000 6's offered at 90 in January are now selling at  $103\frac{1}{2}$ .

The Dutch East Indies are first in the production of tin and rubber; and quinine, spices, and sugar enter into their trade. For the past decade, the trade of this region has shown remarkable expansion.

You have only a limited amount of these bonds left. Present price, 90. Suggest that the prospect wire or telephone your company at once. Write the letter using argument as your sales method, but clinching the action by means of suggestion.

2. You are the manager of the BIG THOMPSON HOTEL in Estes Park, Colorado. You are sending out a letter to induce



people to spend their vacations in Estes Park, and stay at your hotel. Use suggestion as your means of influencing them to come out to your hotel in Estes Park for their vacation this year. If you have never been in the mountains, use your imagination to help create atmosphere in your letter.

Keep these facts in mind: The BIG THOMPSON HOTEL is located at the base of Long's Peak which is higher than Pike's Peak, and it is two miles up the Big Thompson Canyon from Estes Park Village. The main building houses the hotel dining room and kitchen, the big lounge-lobby, the hotel office, and wide porches. The guest rooms are 100 individual cabins situated around the main building. These cabins contain every modern convenience. The hotel has a corral full of thoroughbred horses and has licensed U. S. Government Guides available at reasonable rates to hotel guests. The chef is being brought from one of the biggest hotels on the Pacific Coast. The meals which your hotel serves have gained wide fame. The hotel service is first-class and practically all of your employees are college men who are refined, congenial, and ready to do anything which will insure the enjoyment and comfort of the guests.

3. You are the manufacturer of rowboats and small power launches. Would you use argument or suggestion to sell a rowboat to a river fisherman; a sportsman?

Using your imagination to create pertinent facts about your product, write a letter selling a rowboat to a river fisherman using the method or methods, of influencing thought, feeling, and action which you think best.

Write a letter selling one of your rowboats to a sportsman.

4. The Gullman Railway Coach Company has just signed a contract with your company to furnish "Fred Darvey" eating service in their new dining cars which will be on all through Santa Fe trains to the West from Chicago.

The "Fred Darvey" system is noted for its superb service, its wonderfully cooked food, and its reasonable prices. In order to announce this new arrangement to the traveling public, you have decided to write a letter which will be sent to people who travel frequently to the West on the Santa Fe, people who are contemplating such a trip, and people who can well afford to take such a vacation trip. The mailing list of prospective customers in each community will be compiled by the many local passenger agents of the Santa Fe railway.

Write the letter announcing the installment of the "Fred Darvey" Service in all "through" Santa Fe trains to the West, and at the same time, by the use of suggestion, sell your readers on the idea of taking a trip to the West via the Santa Fe.

5. Turn through a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and find an advertisement for some product—luxury, necessity, or merely something desirable—and write a letter selling this product by means of suggestion. Be sure and visualize your prospect before writing the letter.

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER X

#### *Planning and Constructing the Mail-order Sales Letter*

1. You are writing a sales letter for a firm selling electrical appliances direct by mail. Write a sales letter to housewives inducing them to allow you to send, C. O. D., Parcel Post, the new Standard Electric "Click" iron, the chief feature of which is the automatic thermostatic control which turns the current on when the iron gets too cool and off when the iron gets too hot.

Other features are:

1. Large ironing surface;
2. Comfortable handle, easy grip;
3. Perfect balance;
4. Streamline bevel edge;
5. Already 25,000 enthusiastic women users.

The terms permit the return of the iron, and the money is refunded if within ten days it is found unsatisfactory. An introductory price of \$10 is made during a thirty-day period.

2. Assume that you are a member of the sales department of the Pumola Soap Company, Chicago, Illinois, which manufactures a soap particularly adapted for men in printing shops.

You have decided to write a letter to the managers of three hundred selected printing establishments to get them to try a case at your risk. The case will be sent C. O. D., Parcel Post. The buyer may have his money refunded if he is disappointed with the product.

The soap possesses these qualities:

1. Clears away ink and grease in short order.
2. Produces abundant lather with two rubs of the hands in cold water as well as hot, hard as well as soft.

3. Leaves hands soft and white.
4. Costs no more than ordinary soap if bought by the case.
5. Saves time of employees by its quick action.

Prepare also a card for use in ordering the case and include it with the letter.

3. Secure a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and select any article costing five dollars or less and write a letter selling it direct to the prospect. A suggestive list of such articles are as follows: toothbrushes, shaving cream, pipes, hosiery, automobile polish, underwear, cigars, tire vulcanizers, ties, razors, goggles, insect powders, and sprays, shaving lotions, pajamas, golf balls, hair tonic, and spark plugs.

When planning your letter, determine:

To whom you are trying to sell your product,—your prospect;

Your selling proposition,—price, manner of payment, terms of delivery, and free trial;

How you can make it easy for your prospect to order.

4. You are the Assistant Sales Manager in charge of direct by mail selling for the newly formed Fuller Balloon Tire Company. This company manufactures balloon tires exclusively. Because of an improved process which increases the riding comfort and gives longer wear, the Fuller Company believes that they will soon enjoy a large percentage of the balloon tire trade. Their balloon tire is built on the regular cord tire principle, but each one of the cords is separated from the other by resilient latex rubber. The sides are thin and are properly designed and proportioned to give maximum riding comfort together with long wear and service. The tread is made from a newly processed kind of rubber which your company claims will wear one-half again as long as the average tire tread rubber used on other balloon tires on the market at the present time. You have nearly a million miles of road tests to back up your statement.

Your company is pricing their tires nearly \$2.50 on the average below the price of "balloons" now on the market. The reasons given are: standardization of product, only one type and style of tire, large-scale production, and large volume of business, selling direct to the consumer, thus cutting out salesmen's and dealer's commissions.

The Fuller Company also manufactures wheels and rims for their balloon tires. The wheels and rims are furnished on a near-cost basis so that the sales of balloon tires will be increased thereby.

You are making a special offer to Ford owners of a set of five 29" by 4.68" Fuller "All-Weather" Balloons, five Fuller "Balloon" inner tubes, and five Fuller "Tested" artillery wheels and demountable rims at the special limited time offer of \$112.50. This price does not include the cost of labor which will be necessary to take the old wheels off of the car and put the new balloon wheels and tires on.

Your terms of payment are \$52.50 down and \$10 per month for the next six months. Write the letter selling your special offer to Ford owners.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XI

### *Presenting the Message*

1. Rewrite the following letter for improvement of sentence structure:

Dear Sir:

We regret to see from our books that you have made no purchases on your account for a considerable time, and we wonder if any inattention or faulty service has given cause for dissatisfaction. If so, will you kindly acquaint us with the circumstances, in order that we may investigate intelligently, with a view of making satisfactory adjustment.

Just now, at the beginning of Spring, particularly, you will find it profitable to make use of your account with us in the purchase of your Spring wardrobe, and of any needed home furnishings. Your instructions will receive the careful attention of experienced shoppers, who will execute them on the day of receipt and forward the goods promptly by insured mail.

We extend you a cordial invitation to visit our establishment, to take advantage of the many conveniences placed at the disposal of our patrons, to note the improvements we have been able to bring about in the quality and display of merchandise, and to test the character of service that we render.

Hoping that we may have an early revival of the account and assuring you of our desire to retain your esteemed patronage, we are

Yours very truly,

2. Improve the paragraph structure of the following:

Our amazing document—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and Remedy"—unmasks the typewriter industry. One copy is enclosed herewith. Read it! The typewriter industry will stand before you in all its wastes and extravagances.

You will side with our rebellion—it saves millions for typewriter users.

You will understand thoroughly how it is possible for us to sell you this machine at the price named.

And you will wonder how in the name of common sense any sane person can ever again pay such a price for a standard typewriter.

Yet please remember that in the past many of these excesses that we now condemn were necessary. The public had to be educated to the use of typewriters.

But today conditions are different. Our machine is so well-known, so highly regarded around the world that personal persuasion is no longer required to sell it.

Hence we have abandoned high branch house rents in fifty cities. We have abolished 15,000 salesmen and agents.

In place of them we now send the typewriter itself—direct to you by express.

We ask no deposit—no C. O. D.—nothing except your willingness to give the machine an honest trial for five days.

3. Rewrite to improve the appropriateness of the diction and to make the tone consistent throughout:

Dear Sir:—

CHRISTMAS, sparkling with all of its inspirations of good cheer, makes the world forget its troubles and worries—and get on the sunny side of the street. It is the one supreme day of the year when gentleness, kindness, and affection are in full command, and each one of us finds particular pleasure in cheering up the other fellow. It sets a wonderful example to humanity. It proves how happy we would all be if each one of us took the initiative, as we do on Christmas Day, to spread mental sunshine.

Accept our heartiest wishes for a MERRY CHRISTMAS.

May all of your fondest dreams be realized in 19....

The big political issues have now been settled, which clears the way for the solution of the many economic, social, and industrial problems which have caused so much turmoil in business; and now business is going to swing into step to the tune of real prosperity of the kind that is sound, safe, profitable, and permanent.

Accept our thanks for your coöperation with us during 19.... Your loyalty and good work have been very much appreciated.

Yours very truly,

4. Rewrite the following passage in simple, direct, and clear language:

We have your appeal for information regarding your order for a quantity of 175 gallon barrels, and beg to advise that we have investigated the situation and find that the same cannot be accepted since our mills cannot make such large containers.

5. Develop the following sentence or "core," into a pleasing good-will retaining letter:

Your request for immediate shipment of Spring goods cannot be met until the completion, at the end of this month, of goods which are now in the process of manufacture.



6. Rewrite the following in clear, direct language:

The fundamental requirement for the most efficacious presentation of a written message is the unostentatious verbiage.

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XII

1. Answer the following inquiry sent to the National Cash Register Company, Dayton, Ohio:

Gentlemen:

Please send me prices and terms of payment on a cash register suitable for a department store doing a yearly business of \$25,000.

Yours very sincerely,

N. T. Nagle.

2. Answer the following letter of inquiry asking for a more definite request:

Gentlemen:

Please send me information regarding the publications of the Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C. I am interested in any information you may care to send.

Sincerely yours,

H. Barrett Knowles.

3. Write to the Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., inquiring what should be the training for salesmen planning to go on a sales tour of South American countries.

4. Write a letter of inquiry to the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce at Lima, Ohio, in regard to the suitability of Lima as a possible location for a \$500,000 shoe factory which you are going to build within the next three months.

Relevant facts which will sway you in your decision as to the proper location for your factory, are:

- Transportation facilities;
- Fuel supply;
- Closeness to source of raw materials;
- Types and kinds of local and state factory legislation;
- Availability of a suitable plot of ground;
- Price of real estate;
- Closeness of plot of ground to railroad;
- Water supply and cost of water;
- Labor supply;
- Other industries located in the city under consideration;
- Special inducements from the city under consideration.

5. You are the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of Lima, Ohio, mentioned in the preceding problem. Write an answer—letter of information—to the shoe manufacturer in regard to the suitability of Lima as a location for his new shoe factory.

6. You are the Sales Manager for the Paramount Knitting Mills at Kankakee, Illinois. You receive the following letter of inquiry:

Paramount Knitting Mills,  
Kankakee, Illinois.

Gentlemen:

I should like very much to learn about your methods and your processes of dyeing hosiery, your mercerizing procedure, and the formulas of the dyes which you use.

I shall use this information in a term paper which I am preparing for a Business Organization and Operation course here at this college. The title of the paper is, "American Hosiery Dyeing Processes."

Thanking you in advance for this favor, I remain

Cordially yours,

Benton J. Culver.

Realizing that this young man may be a future booster and customer, you are extremely sorry that you can't comply with his request because your dyeing formulas and processes are secret and only a few trusted men in your mills know what they are.

Your reason for keeping them a secret is that you do not wish your competitors to learn your formulas and processes. You feel that your dyeing procedure is superior to all others, a fact which enhances the market value of your hosiery and enables you to compete more easily with other brands of hosiery on the market.

Write the letter. Try to retain the student's good-will and offer to send any information about the knitting process or any other processes which are not secrets in your mills.

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XIII

1. Write an order to a large department store ordering a half-dozen separate toilet articles for which you do not know the price and which you cannot purchase in the town where you live. Send a money-order for an amount in excess of that to which you expect the number of items to total. Give all the information necessary for a clerk to fill the order easily and accurately.

2. Make hotel reservations at the LaSalle Hotel in Chicago for August 20-24 in order to attend the Retail Clothier's Association Convention. Give definite instructions as to the kind and price of room you wish.

3. Turn through the pages of *System*, *Printer's Ink*, *Advertising Fortnightly*, *Mailbag*, or *Postage*, and find the detail necessary in subscribing for the magazine. Request that your subscription begin with a certain issue. Enclose a check in payment.

4. The following letter is not remarkably bad, but it does not make the most of its opportunity. Rewrite it in the light of these circumstances:

- (1) This is the first order from this customer.
- (2) The manufacturers have been running a national advertising campaign.

TAYLOR, ALLAN, &amp; COMPANY

Manufacturers of

"Taylor-Made Weatherstrip"

Morris, Ill.

October 30, 1923.

Blank Lumber Co.  
Mansfield, Ill.

Mr. Manager:

We are sending you via mail today as per order received sets of WEATHERSTRIPS and trust that they will arrive in good condition and promptly. All we ask you to do on these sets is to use a little care and follow directions carefully, and we know what the result will be.

We have equipped some of the largest and best buildings in the City of Chicago and most all important Cities in the U. S., and we do not know of one instance where this was properly applied but what it was away beyond everyone's expectation.

We assure you of prompt attention on all future orders and trust that we can hear from you soon with another order. We thank you.

Yours for SERVICE,

Taylor, Allan, &amp; Co.

5. A small town grocer, A. B. Henderson of Greenville, Wisconsin, has sent a modest order for your various brands of meats. It is his first order. He is sent the following letter:

Dear Sir:

We have your esteemed letter of the 14th inst. and shall take much pleasure in shipping in accordance therewith but cannot do so before tomorrow as it is now too late to ship today.

Hoping, however, notwithstanding the delay, the meats may arrive before they will be actually needed, we remain,

Yours truly,

Costigan, McNeal, &amp; Libby.

Rewrite the letter taking away its stereotyped style, and its definite tang of the ordinary routine acknowledgment, and make it a business-building letter. Show him that he is a "welcome addition to the ever growing list of satisfied customers." Your assurance of service, your interest in his business, or any feature that allows you to personalize the message will go a long way to cement friendship and good-will.

6. Rewrite the following letter suggesting substitution for the articles which you do not have:

Eichler Bros.,  
Benton, Ill.

Gentlemen:

We wish to thank you for your order of Sept. 13th, shipment of which was made on Sept. 16th, via parcel post.

As we have discontinued carrying Medium Green in Article 83, we are obliged to cancel your order for this item.

We appreciate your orders and ask that we be allowed to serve you again in the near future.

Yours truly,

THE WESTERN SILK CO.

CSM:B

7. Rewrite the following acknowledgment to emphasize the fact that you will do everything possible to hasten shipment:

Gentlemen:—

We have filled all possible on your recent order and have asked our factory to make shipment of the balance. Style 738, size 23 will be sent to you direct from the factory, at the earliest possible moment. There will, no doubt, be some delay.

We regret the delay and thanking you for the order, we are

Very truly yours,  
Peabody, James & Co.

8. Three weeks ago you ordered from Kelly, Jones & Co. four tires for your Ford Coupé which you intend to use on your car on a month's motor trip through the East. You accompanied the order with a draft. It is now only five days before you are to start on the trip, and the tires have not come.

Write to them making a self-interest appeal for the immediate return of your money or the shipment of your tires.

#### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XIV

##### CREDIT

1. You are Mr. Ray Bosworth who is just starting up in the hardware business in Colchester, New York, a town having a population of 1,600. There are two other hardware stores in the town, but as Colchester is a big trading center for the surrounding agricultural country, you feel that there is ample opportunity to develop a trade.

You are 32 years old and have graduated from a four years' commercial course in the Colchester Community High School and have also graduated from a two years' business course in a business college at Albany. While clerking in one of the two hardware stores, you have saved \$5,000.

Write a letter to the Hinds Hardware Company asking them for credit. The Hinds Hardware Company has never been able to sell their line to either of the two hardware stores in Colchester. Give references to a bank and the proprietor of a small department store.

2. You are the Assistant Credit Manager for the Hinds Hardware Company mentioned in the preceding problem. Write the letter to Mr. Bosworth acknowledging his application for credit. Enclose a property and financial questionnaire in this letter.

3. At this time write the references given by Mr. Bosworth in his letter requesting credit.

4. You have heard from three of the references written to in regard to Mr. Bosworth's status. One of the men says that he has had no business dealings with Mr. Bosworth lately and for that reason would be unwilling to commit himself as to his financial standing or his character. However, he said that basing his judgment on past dealings with Mr. Bosworth, that he was a very capable, upright, and progressive man.



The second man to whom you wrote reports that as far as he knows Mr. Bosworth is "all right." This letter told you almost nothing about Mr. Bosworth's standing and was practically worthless to you.

However, the third man referred to, who is Mr. Bosworth's banker, gives a very good report of Mr. Bosworth's capacity, integrity, and financial standing. He said that Mr. Bosworth has supported himself as well as two young sisters for nearly 14 years, and at the present time has \$1,000 in Liberty Bonds, and \$1,260 on savings account in the bank. The banker also stated that Mr. Bosworth was well-known and liked in the town of Colchester, as well as in the surrounding country.

(A) Assuming that you would grant the man credit, write Mr. Bosworth telling him of your decision. Outline your collection terms in the letter so as to avoid misunderstandings in the future.

(B) Assuming that you would not grant credit to Mr. Bosworth, write him a letter refusing him credit.

5. You are the credit manager of A. B. Fairbank and Co. of Chicago, Illinois, and have a request for credit information concerning A. R. Jennings who has recently sent an order for merchandise to Carson, Pirie, Scott and Co. On examining your credit files, you find that A. R. Jennings three years ago was given a credit limit of \$300 and paid bills promptly. For a year and a half he has not discounted his bills, and last month you decided to sell to him on a cash basis only.

Write a letter to Carson, Pirie, Scott and Co. giving them unfavorable credit information.

6. You are in the credit department of a large department store. Mr. C. J. McLean, of Charlestown, Illinois, has just applied to your firm for credit. He says that he is engaged in truck gardening near Charlestown. He gives the First National Bank of Charlestown as a reference.

Write to this bank asking them to give you in confidence credit information about Mr. C. J. McLean. Ask at least five specific questions about Mr. McLean.

7. You, as Credit Manager of the department store in the preceding problem, write Mr. McLean opening an account.

8. Assume that you are the purchasing agent of the Eatmore Breakfast Food Company in which factory a new type of gas-

burner is needed such as that manufactured by the Blue Gem Burner Corporation of Eaton, Pa. From the correspondence with them, you believe that their Model T Burner will meet your needs. However, you wish to get better terms than the usual net cash 30 days, because thirty days is too short for a satisfactory test. You also want the privilege of returning the burners if for any reason they do not satisfy your requirements.

Other features:—

- I. Your firm has high rating in Dun's and Bradstreet's. Shows great purchasing volume.
- II. If it is satisfactory, you will make the Model T Burner standard equipment in your plant.
- III. The Blue Gem people could, therefore, well afford to make an effort, even at the sacrifice of their stated policy, to get their Burner established with your firm.
- IV. You can and will buy elsewhere unless your requirements are met. Your letter, however, should nowhere specifically state this idea.

Write to the Blue Gem Burner Corporation for a sixty-day credit period.

#### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XV

##### *Collections*

1. You are the collection manager of the Rock Harbor Coal Company in Rock Harbor, Maine. The account of the Zenith Manufacturing Company of Portland for 64 tons of "Ben Frank" coal is now two weeks overdue. Your terms are 2/10, net 30. Your rating of this firm is "R-S"—responsible, but slow. However, they are unusually slow in paying their present bill of \$416.64.

Write a series of collection letters that will collect their bill and collect the bills of other customers in the future.

Write a letter for each of the following steps:

Letter (A)—Formal notification.

Letter (B)—Write them a reminder letter. Assume that their failure to pay is due to an oversight.

Letter (C)—Assume that some unusual circumstance has given them a justifiable reason for withholding payment and that payment will be made when this difficulty is removed.

Letter (D)—Assume that they are not taking the proper responsibility in the matter. Make your appeal on fairness, pride, or self-interest.

Letter (E)—You assume that the customer can pay if 'made to see the seriousness of not paying. Use fear as your weapon.

In this series make each letter more serious and firm than the preceding one.

2. You are the Collection Manager of O. Hest & Co., Wholesale Grocers, Peoria, Illinois. Your firm's annual sales run over \$1,000,000. Your salesmen cover the whole State of Illinois, and you are a well-known, and reputable business house.

The terms of your house are 3/10, net 30. The General Manager of your company has asked you to write a form collection series to collect accounts from your small retail grocery store customers all over the state.

Do not write the letters in the series, but draw up a plan of the series giving:

- (A) The letters that you will write and the step in collection procedure that each letter executes.
- (B) The timing of the letters. The intervals between letters. Justify these time intervals.
- (C) Any additional details which you may consider necessary to make the General Manager understand the mechanics of your collection series.

3. Assume that you are the Manager of the Credit and Collection Department for a publishing company in New York City. Your company has been selling a limited edition of a special set of "all the best writings of Mark Twain, in 12 volumes, at an extraordinarily low price of \$36.00."

Collection Procedure: The collection sequence calls for two formal notices, one the day the installment due is not paid, one a week later; five multigraphed letters at intervals of two weeks, the fourth of which is a personal letter from the treasurer and the fifth of which is a threat. In each of letters 2, 3, 4, and 5, an effort is made to resell the customer upon his purchase; to bring his mind back to the point of view he had when he made the purchase, to one of enthusiasm.

Intervals of letters: Letters are sent every two weeks and timed to arrive just preceding the time to pay a new installment.

You are asked to write the second notification and the fourth installment letter. Select the appeal and tone suitable to the middle class, the stage in collection procedure, and the nature of the proposition.

4. Assume the sequence in the above problem will be used in the following case. Write the fifth letter: The debtor, J. U. C. 1202 W. John St., Champaign, has paid nine installments and has failed to pay the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. The sales letter, while highly attractive, because of the colored illustrations, made no exaggerated claims. On the coupon which the customer used to order the books the length of the approval period was clearly stated. By the approval period was meant that period during which the books could be returned for credit.

5. Mr. J. C. Brown is proprietor of the General Merchandise Store of Avon, Illinois (population 1,000). Most of his trade is with farmers who are accustomed to let bills run on until their threshing is done or until their corn or hogs are sold.

Mr. Brown is a progressive young business man and realizes how much his purchasing power is crippled by this haphazard method of collecting bills and paying accounts. He wishes to install a modern collection system whereby statements of accounts will be mailed monthly to all customers. He fears, however, that these statements will offend his farmer friends unless he first educates them up to the idea of a regular, business-like method of paying accounts.

Write the letter he sends to all his customers announcing his new collection system. Emphasize among other things the superior purchasing power such a system would give him and the consequent benefits to the farmers themselves. In other words, sell the collection letter idea.

6. Mr. Jacob X. Pase, a very eccentric old man, has failed to pay his bill of \$78.50 which your hardware store holds against him. He made his purchase of a Blue Ribbon Seed Drill on November 3, and it is now February 16th. Your terms are 5/10, 2/30, net 60. Three formal notifications and one personal letter have already been sent to Mr. Pase; however, he has not as yet paid up his account. As a customer of five years' standing, he has always been slow pay, but his rating is good. Care must be taken not to offend him.

Be careful to keep any tone of threat out of the letter, but make a definite, firm, and courteous appeal to his sense of fairness.

7. Problem: To write a letter that will get the money and keep the customer's good-will.

The following letter is the fifth of a series sent by a furniture company to collect payment for a kitchen cabinet ordered on a partial payment basis. The preceding letters were (1) a printed reminder, (2) a personal request from the sales manager's office, (3) an appeal to the customer's pride in keeping his record clear, (4) an appeal to his sense of fairness in keeping the contract. These appeals were signed by the credit manager. The account is now two months old, and the company is demanding payment. The order-blank which the customer signed is legally binding and can be made the basis for prosecution if necessary. This letter makes the threat in a blunt, discourteous manner.

December 6, 1924.

Dear Sir:

Your failure to grant me even the courtesy of a reply in reference to your action seems unexplainable, and I regret to inform you that unless remittance is received within the next ten days, I shall feel at liberty to turn the matter over to our Legal Department for attention.

Needless to say, I would much prefer to avoid taking such action and trust you will render it unnecessary by letting me hear from you at once.

Yours very truly,

BLANK FURNITURE COMPANY.

Willard Ramsay,

Collection Manager.

Rewrite the letter, making the message positive and optimistic, in a tone courteous and firm, and showing "you attitude" instead of so much "I." Try to *re-sell* the cabinet and make him meet his obligations in the future. Let him see that his delinquency is preventing him from getting other furniture which he may want from us on similar terms, and that it may impair his credit standing with other firms as well. Do not omit the demand



nor the accompanying threat of handing the account over to the legal department.

8. You are the proprietor of an advertising agency. Write a "stunt" collection letter (human interest, narration, or any novel, attention-fixing idea or method) to "ginger-up"—hasten—payments from a group of haberdashers whose advertising you handle regularly through your agency.

This letter will not be a part of your regular collection efforts.

9. You are the treasurer of a wholesale firm. The credit manager has brought to you a file of correspondence concerning a retail merchant and has suggested that your company sue for an amount which has been charged against the customer for six months. You know that the customer is able to pay, but will pay only when sufficient pressure is brought to bear. Write a letter to this customer appealing to his self-interest. Imply that you know that the law is on your side, and that you'll get your money ultimately; so why not pay now.

### PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XVI

#### *Writing Letters Making Claims*

1. Assume that you are the proprietor of a small store in a rural community, handling medium-priced and low-priced lines of clothing for men and boys.

Two weeks ago you sold an overcoat to a young farmer who has been one of your regular customers for several years. Today he came back, threw the coat on a counter, and demanded his \$17.89, declaring that he was "done." When he had blown-off a little and could come down to particulars, he showed you the places where the nap had worn off and the lining had come loose at the seams. "Besides," he said, "it don't keep out the cold!" You persuaded him that he ought to have a better coat, and you offered to allow full credit for the worn coat toward purchase of a new one. He finally took the \$30 coat on which you made a special price of \$24.89, with the understanding that he was to pay you the additional \$7 after he had worn the coat a month and found it satisfactory in every way.

You have built up a reputation for quality so that customers are likely to expect good quality even when they have paid a low price for a product.



Now you are sending the unsatisfactory coat back to the factory, although you have no special guarantee on this line. Write the letter to the manufacturer to get an adjustment. Use these facts:

1. This coat is one of a lot invoiced to you on the fourth of last September at \$140 per dozen.
2. You have sold several others of this lot to other farmers.
3. You have recently placed an order with the same manufacturer for a lot of suits for next spring.
4. You have been well satisfied in all dealings with this manufacturer in the past two years.
5. You have had no other complaints on the overcoats.

Write the claim letter. Write it clearly and courteously in order to secure an adjustment on the returned coat.

2.

August 21, 1924.

Black, Harrison & Co.,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Gentlemen:

About three weeks ago I sent you an order plus money for a "Glide EZ" canoe and a Distol fishing outfit. I also stated *explicitly* that I had to have this order by August 20 as that was the date my vacation started.

Well,—my vacation has started, and I have no canoe or no fishing outfit. I'd think that you birds would have a *little* horse sense and give a few of your customers some service. You get a guy's money and then you don't give a d—n whether he gets the goods or not.

I haven't a bit of use now for the things that I ordered; so I want to see some speedy action out of you long-eared shysters in getting my money to me, P. D. Q.!!

Yours,

Rewrite the above letter. Be firm, but be courteous. Make the company addressed realize the extreme inconvenience which

you have experienced because of the failure of the vacation goods to arrive.

3. Assume these facts:

You have a large retail hardware store here in town. Last March you were given a contract to furnish and install the furnaces for eighteen houses to be built by a local realty development company.

As soon as you received the contract, you sent your order for furnaces to the Hot Air Furnace Co., of Rochester, N. Y., and you specified that delivery should be made on or before September 30. The Hot Air people acknowledged receipt of the order and promised delivery by the date specified. However, on October 1 the furnaces had not arrived. You wrote for information about them. On October 5 you received word that on account of the great demand the factory had been swamped and had not yet reached your order; that although they knew in March of the conditions at the factory, they had believed that your order would certainly be reached by August 31 and hence had not informed you of the possibility of delay; and that your order could not be shipped until October 23.

Assume that today is October 6. The realty development company is pressing you hard for the completion of your contract. The houses are complete except for furnaces, and the company holds you responsible for the delay which keeps it from realizing on its investment. You are likely to lose their confidence, and hence future business, and perhaps you are liable to suit for damages resulting from the delay.

With this in mind, write a letter to The Hot Air Furnace Co. in an attempt to get immediate shipment. Use these facts: You have been the agent of the Hot Air Co. for ten years; you have had other contracts with this realty company, but stand to lose now all chance at future business with them (all through no fault of your own); even your reputation here in town will suffer; and all of this means less Hot Air furnaces to sell, less business for the Hot Air Furnace Co. Try to persuade them to see that they will injure themselves if they do not make immediate shipment. Do not threaten or even hint at bringing suit against them for non-performance of their contract.

4. You are the proprietor of the Henk's Hardware Store. Fifteen days ago you ordered from the United Bicycle Manu-

facturing Company through their salesman, Mr. Jobson, 8 "Playboy" bicycles. This was a special order for a newly formed boys' bicycle club in your town.

The club members are growing impatient for the bicycles. Today the President of the Club informed you that they will wait just five days more for the bicycles and if they are not received by that time, the club will cancel their order.

In writing your claim letter to the United Bicycle Co., keep these facts in mind: You have been their agent for over 14 years, and last year you sold more bicycles than any other single agent in the state. Complain of the poor service on the order and impress on them the results that will follow if the shipment fails to arrive within the next five days. Point out that such a costly delay will injure your reputation for good service and will affect your future sales.

5. You are the Assistant Sales Manager for the "Farmer's Friend" Work-Sock Manufacturing Co. Two months ago you signed a six months' contract with the Service Lithographing Company to print ten thousand hosiery boxes per month. The contract also gave you an option on the renewal of your contract on the same terms for an additional 12 months. In the contract there was a definite statement to the effect that the lithographing on the boxes was to be according to specifications determined and agreed upon by the Sales Manager of your company and the Chief Designer for the Service Lithographing Company.

You now have received three months' output of the lithographed boxes. The boxes turned out during the first month were entirely satisfactory, but the boxes turned out during the last two months have been extremely unsatisfactory. The colors of the lithographing on the boxes have been allowed to overlap, and this gives them a very mussy appearance.

When the quality of the lithographing was not up to standard on the second month's output, you assumed that some unavoidable circumstance made it so, but now, after receiving the third months' output, the lithographing of which is a shade poorer than that of the second month, you feel that the printing company is not living up to its contract. Write the claim letter.

Intimate that unless the workmanship on next month's output is improved you shall feel obliged to cancel your present contract and forego your option on its extension.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XVII

*Writing Letters Making Adjustments*

1.

James, Flint, and Company,  
Kansas City, Missouri.

Gentlemen:

I ordered a winter top for a Ford touring car almost four weeks ago and have not heard anything from it. The time has been so long, and I couldn't wait any longer on it, so I bought another machine. I do not want the top now. Please return the money as soon as possible as I need it.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain as ever,

Yours sincerely,

John Fred Minzer,  
R. 2, Box 64,  
Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Write the adjustment letter. Try to get the man to see the advisability of taking the top as he will need it in the fall, and by taking it now he will be saved the trouble of re-ordering. You had already shipped the top before you received his letter.

2. You are the vice president in charge of adjustments in the New York office of the Triplex Company, manufacturers of stroppers for safety razor blades. Your company does a large mail-order business besides selling through dealers.

Four years ago Mr. Herbert Brummell, 501 E. John St., Cherb-  
burg, Ohio, bought by mail direct from the factory Triplex  
Strop-  
per #593618 for five dollars with a ten-years' guarantee.  
Today, you receive from him a letter saying that he is returning  
the stropper for repairs, as the bearings have worn out.

Although the package has not yet come to your hands, you  
know from similar cases that his claim is probably justified, and  
you are prepared to make an adjustment as follows: You can  
repair his stropper without charge, but you prefer to allow him  
three dollars for it toward purchase of a new one.

The new Triplex has heavier bearings and other improvements

over the old model, sells at the same price (\$5), and is also guaranteed for ten years. It costs \$1.10 to manufacture and is sold to dealers at \$40 per dozen. The old machine yields salvage to the value of fifteen cents, but to repair it would cost you about ninety cents.

Write a letter to Mr. Brummell proposing to send him a new stropper guaranteed for ten years for two dollars.

3. A man ordered merchandise and sent \$25 in currency to pay for it. The mail-order house receiving the order sent \$5 worth of merchandise and placed the order for the rest of the merchandise in the order-holding-file waiting for the replenishment of its stock of merchandise with which to fill the order. If a letter containing this information was sent to the customer, he failed to receive it.

The customer then writes asking for the rest of the merchandise or for a refund of \$20. The mail-order house on referring to the records does not find the order and requests the customer to lend it the invoice that ordinarily accompanies a shipment. The customer ignores the request and asks again for the merchandise or the refund of his money.

Rewrite the discourteous adjustment letter on pages 88-89 which was sent to the customer at this time and which brought the invoice but lost the customer.

Keep in mind that you wish to give the customer what he requests, but that to do so you need the invoice or bill. Moreover, remember that although you may be justified in thinking that the customer is trying to get merchandise which he did not order since this is your second request for the invoice or bill, there is the possibility that he does not understand the meaning of the term invoice; that he may hesitate to part with the evidence that your firm owes him twenty dollars in merchandise or money; or that he is stubborn. The customer is, however, justified in thinking that *you* should have records.

To repeat: Your object is to secure the invoice. What can you say that will show your customer that it is to his interest to send it? How can you make him want to send it?

4. Here is a letter which left the customer permanently peeved. He was a retailer who had sold an expensive sweater to one of his best regular customers. She had returned it because she had bought it under the impression that it was color-fast.

The retailer sent the sweater to the manufacturer, explaining that he had thought that this grade sweater was warranted color-fast and asking for an adjustment. He did not specify what adjustment he expected, leaving it to the manufacturer to suggest specific terms.

This is the reply he received:

September 21, 1923.

Mr. John E. Jones,  
Champaign, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

In connection with the silk ladies blouse sweater returned to us for adjustment, inspection of the garment does not justify that the manufacturer is responsible for its condition.

We have returned the garment under separate cover. It will be noted that the condition is due to perspiration as was learned by the superintendent of our knit goods plant. It will be seen that the perspiration has turned the color of the garment under the arm, which may happen to a garment no matter of what kind, as perspiration is an acid which eats through all materials. Silk is delicate and not subject to abuse.

While we absolutely guarantee our merchandise to give entire satisfaction if not up to the standard to please the merchant, still there are certain restrictions, conditions which may occur, that we are in no way responsible, that is not due to any fault in the manufacture or in the material itself.

We ask that you give the matter further consideration, and we feel confident that you will also realize that we are justified in our position.

Yours, very truly,

Clinger Isaac Co.

Rewrite the letter. Make it *build* business instead of destroy it as this letter does.

5. Rewrite the following letter to a customer who has taken an unjustified deduction:



Dear Sir:

Just a glance at our bill is enough to reveal the fact that we grant cash discount only when payment is made within 30 days after the bill is rendered. Your check received this morning is now 12 days past due. For this reason you have no right to the \$65 deducted as discount. We have credited your account for the \$600 remitted and ask that you immediately send us \$65 to balance the account.

Yours very truly,

6. A proprietor of a small retail store returned to the Blank Suspender Factory a dozen pairs of suspenders in which the elastic had deteriorated and which had been in his stock for two years and asked for credit.

The factory offered to reweb them at bare factory cost:

|           |        |        |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| 5/12 Doz. | C81 @  | \$1.   |
| 1/12 Doz. | CW81 @ | .37    |
| 2/12 Doz. | NC81 @ | .74    |
| 4/12 Doz. | CX81 @ | .98    |
|           |        | <hr/>  |
|           |        | \$3.26 |

Write the letter selling the customer the proposed adjustment.

7. You are the newly appointed Correspondence Supervisor and Sales Promotion Manager for the McDarnick Farm Implements Mfg. Co. The sales of this company have fallen off during the last year apparently from some cause within your control.

To get at a working basis for the purpose of building up your sales you have examined your customers' accounts and have picked out those accounts which have fallen off in volume during the last year.

Write a form letter to be sent out to customers with such accounts inquiring if there have been any unpleasant occurrences or any unadjusted claims or errors that have caused them to buy less goods from your firm. Try to induce the customer to begin buying more goods from you. Emphasize that business conditions are excellent, and that the quality of your goods and the efficiency of your service are as high as ever.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XVIII

*Writing Application Letters*

1. Write application letters to answer the following advertisements. Use fictitious qualifications pertinent to the objects of the letter.

## SECRETARY-STENOGRAPHER

Evanston organization has opportunity for experienced secretary of exceptional personality, pleasing appearance, and capacity for big volume of work. Real selling experience desirable, also residence and acquaintance Evanston or North Shore. Difficult position, but immediate, permanent, and valuable connection for successful applicant. Write in detail at once. Address F T 325. Tribune.

## YOUNG MAN—YOU CAN BE IDENTIFIED

with the largest electrical mfgs. in the world. If you have pleasing personality and are willing to work; \$30 to \$35 per week during training. See Mr. Salzberg at 9:30 a. m. or 1:30 p. m. only. 348 Otis bldg., cor. La Salle and Madison.

## YOUNG MAN

21 years of age, to help display man in furniture store, to make himself generally useful. Steady position and chance for promotion to one who can qualify. Apply to Mr. Murphy, Hartman Furniture and Carpet Co., 1272 Milwaukee Ave.

2. Through an old friend of yours, you are informed that the People's Gas Light and Coke Company of Chicago is looking for a young man to fill the position of Assistant Correspondence Manager. They want a man with a knowledge of human nature, experience in advertising and salesmanship, who can handle adjustments satisfactorily. They require a well-educated man, one of the finer strain, and of the future executive type. The position which is open offers a very unusual opportunity for a progressive, hard-working young man who can qualify.

Assume that you have been out of college three years, and that your business experience fits well with the requirements stipulated by the Gas Company. Write the letter.

3. You are the candidate for an A.B. degree in June from the College of Commerce which you are attending. You are especially interested in correspondence work and have been considering seriously teaching business correspondence in some college or university for a year or two after your graduation. A friend of yours tells you that an assistant in the Business Letter Writing Department of his home-town college has just accepted a position in a university. This appears to you to be an opportunity to secure a good teaching position for the next year.

You find that the head of the department of the college where the vacancy has occurred, is Dr. J. A. Browning. Assume these facts: You have had one year's course in Business Correspondence at your college. You have also had three summers' employment in the correspondence department of the A. B. Lewis Department Stores, Inc., in Chicago. The Head of the Department of Business Correspondence at your College has already manifested a desire to give you a recommendation. You received the grade of "A" in all of your courses in Business Correspondence.

Write an application letter to Dr. Browning applying for the vacated position. Add any detail of qualification which you think relevant.

4. Mr. B. Corrigan is the sole owner of a large-sized brick factory in a town of 15,000 in the central part of Indiana. With no school education whatsoever, Mr. Corrigan has come up through the "school of hard knocks" to his present position. He is a bachelor and has no close relatives and very few friends.

He is growing old, and he feels that he needs a capable young man to become Assistant Superintendent of his brick factory. However, he wants a young man who will be more like a son to him than just an employee.

The salary offered is \$250 per month to start, with a rapid increase if the ability of the person warrants.

You are a Senior in a College of Industrial Technique and Management. You are a reliable and capable-looking fellow, and you feel that Mr. Corrigan will take a liking to you if you

can only have a chance at the job. You are an honor man at your school and have been an athlete as well. Remember that Mr. Corrigan has had no high school or college education. Write the application letter. You learn all of this through a friend.

5. A few years ago a young, newly married couple from Cleveland, Ohio, built a model gasoline cruiser yacht called the "Speejacks," and fitted it up for a tour around the world. This yacht was one of the world's most wonderfully built and equipped yachts. It required only a crew of two to operate it, the Captain and a marine engineer to take care of the motors. The gasoline supply for the "Speejacks" had been shipped and placed at predetermined places on the world route. Every little detail had been taken care of. Then the newly-weds published the following advertisement:

Wanted:—A young college man 20 or 21 years of age to be a companion and a member of the world voyage on the model cruiser, "Speejacks." Will be gone one year. The successful applicant must be athletic, play some musical instrument (like a ukelele), must be congenial, be able to swim well, and play cards. In other words, he must be an all-around person. All expenses will be paid and a small salary in addition. Write a short but complete application letter addressed to F T 211, Times.

You can see by the advertisement the qualifications that a person must have in order to be at all eligible for the job. Assume you have the qualifications specified. Write the application letter.

6. This is a problem in selecting the facts essential to the position for which an unsolicited application is to be made, and to use those facts to develop and present one central selling point.

You are the assistant correspondence supervisor in the investment department of the Commercial Trust and Savings Bank of St. Louis. Mr. Andrews, your immediate superior, has been with the bank for a long time, and you have little chance of advancement while he lives. Also you want a position where there is more selling, and you have been investigating various bond houses.

You have been particularly interested in Smith, Brooks & Co.

of Chicago because of a certain bond selling plan that they have just started to use. This has been called to your attention by several of your customers, and is, in short, the offering of low denomination bonds with an easy payment plan stretching over ten months, a feature that appeals especially to the average man on a modest salary.

After careful investigation, you find that Smith, Brooks & Co. is a conservative, well established bond house, handling only gilt edge securities, and that the senior member of the firm does the hiring. He has done this for forty years, and it is largely through his efforts that the firm holds its present rating. Being a man of the old school, Mr. Smith is very jealous of the reputation of his firm.

Having decided that this is the firm that you would like to tie up with, you are writing for a position as correspondent in the sales department. The following facts furnish your background:

Education: You have studied stenography and typewriting in high school; you were graduated with honors from the College of Commerce, University of Illinois, in which you studied correspondence courses—Rhetoric 10 and 21—and advertising, and took extra work in finance and banking, and English.

Experience: Bank messenger in vacations during high school years; solicitor of advertising for college paper; during senior year part-time employee of local advertising agency; for two summers correspondent in general offices of Tenk Hardware Co., wholesalers, where you learned dictation and use of form-paragraph manual, and assisted in handling copy for folders. After graduation you spent a year and a half with an oil stock promotion company which suspended business after getting in trouble with the postal authorities, though through no fault of yours, and for the past two years you have held your present position. You introduced a new form-paragraph manual that has been very successful.

References: P. G. Hopkins, Pres. First National Bank, Tuscola.

J. L. Brown, Mgr. Champaign Advertising Co.

B. P. Cady, Pres. Tenk Hdw. Co.

F. M. Knox, Correspondence Supervisor, Tenk Hdw. Co.

David Kinley, President University of Illinois.  
C. M. Thompson, Dean of College of Commerce,  
University of Illinois.

D. F. Sims, Pres. Commercial Trust and Savings  
Bank, St. Louis.

G. H. Estes, Cashier Commercial Trust and  
Savings Bank, St. Louis.

C. P. Andres, supervisor of investment depart-  
ment of Commercial Trust and Savings Bank,  
St. Louis.

Miscellaneous: Your age is 25. You are to be married in June to a Chicago girl. It is a six hour run from Chicago to St. Louis.

Write the application letter.

7. You are a senior graduating from a university. Write an application letter for the position you would like to have and to the firm by which you would like to be employed when you graduate.

8. You are the employment manager for the People's Gas Company who have been seeking a young man to fill the position of Assistant Correspondence Manager. Write a letter to a Professor James Goodman, Blank University, whose name has been used by George Baker, an applicant for the position, asking Professor Goodman such questions as you need to know in order to decide upon Mr. Baker's suitability for the position.

9. You are the sales manager of the A. B. Long and Co., bond firm. Write a letter to D. B. Fernald, President of the Second National Bank of Cairo, Illinois, asking them to tell you about the ability, reliability, personality, education, and experience of Julius Greenman who has been employed as paying teller in his bank for three years.

10. You are the teacher of salesmanship in the commerce course of the University of Southern California. You are requested by a former student to write a letter of recommendation to help him secure a position as salesman for the Bowan Truck Company of Lynn, Massachusetts, which specializes in electric trucks to be used in handling medium loads on station platforms and on industrial floors.

Write the letter to the Bowan Truck Company.

11. One of your best friends in college is going to your home-



town to make a survey of the work done by the various businessmen's organizations in your city. Write a letter of introduction for him to the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in your home town.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XIX

### *Writing Special Types of Sales Letters*

1. Assume these facts:

You are the Sales Manager of the Martesta Radio Corporation. Your company has just recently placed on the market the new "Concert Special" Cabinet Receiver. This is a five vacuum tube set and is guaranteed to bring in stations from all over the United States, stations in Cuba, Bermuda, Canada, Mexico, and the Hawaiian Islands. This set is mechanically perfect and operates on dry cell batteries which make its operation very economical.

The set is built in a beautifully-constructed and finished walnut cabinet. The loudspeaker is also built in the cabinet. The cabinet is exquisitely carved and adds a very attractive piece of furniture to the living room or den. The set is the size of the average phonograph. The aerial being built in the cabinet makes the set all ready for operation; there is no inconvenience of placing ground wires and putting up aërials.

The set retails at \$245 complete and installed.

Write a sales letter advertising this radio set. Make it interesting.

2. Write a letter preparing a prospective customer for a salesman's call to demonstrate the radio set in Problem One.

3. Write a letter to a dealer preparing him for a salesman's call to demonstrate the new "Martesta Concert Special" in Problem One, which the dealer has not as yet stocked although he sells the Martesta line at the present time.

4. The Peck Duplicator Company of New York does business entirely by direct mail selling.

They have a new type of duplicator called the "*Speedograph*" which they are going to sell to college professors. Here are some pertinent facts about the machine:

It is the only self-feeding duplicating machine on the market.

It makes copies of all kinds of forms direct from an original writing made by typewriter, pen, or pencil on a person's regular stationery. There are no stencils to cut, and it uses no printing ink. It can be used to make copies of examination questions, laboratory directions, drawings, charts, lecture notes, notices—in fact, all of the many things of which several copies are required. It is very simple to operate. It has no complicated mechanical parts to get out of order. It is silent and is free from vibration.

The rest of the facts, pictures, and testimonials are included in the booklet which you enclose in each letter.

Make the letter you write a "single-throw" letter. (A "single-throw" sales letter is one which takes a person through the successive mental stages of attention, interest, conviction, and action and completes the sale in one letter.)

5. The Drawn Metal Specialties Company is the manufacturer of a new radio aerial wire called "The Jiffy Ribbon Antenna." Here are some of the high spots in the sales argument:

1. It gives big reception with low resistance.
2. Has exceptionally high tensile strength.
3. It will not kink or curl.
4. It will not rust or corrode.
5. It does not collect black oxide like other antennæ.
6. It is built to withstand years of service.
7. It is furnished complete with insulators.
8. It is priced reasonably at \$1.50 retail.

This company wishes to wholesale this new ribbon antenna direct to radio dealers. The wholesale price to dealers is \$10.40 per dozen including express.

Write the letter.

6. Mr. John D. Baivere is a wealthy real estate owner in a town of 18,000. He owns six large store buildings and a large theatre. All of these buildings have tin roofs, and Mr. Baivere repaints them every two years to insure their preservation.

You are the sales manager of the American Asphalt Paint Company. You have a special preservative paint called Valdura Asphalt Paint which you believe to be the best roof paint on the market.

Here are some pertinent facts about it:

Valdura imparts a heavy, dense coating which is always pli-

able. It protects the surface with a rubber-like film. It positively resists water, weather, acids, and alkali for an indefinite period. It can be used on wood, steel, concrete, piping under or above ground, tanks, smoke stacks, or any type of roofing. Valdura is guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction, or purchase money will be cheerfully refunded.

You feel confident that a single painting of Valdura will preserve the roofs of Mr. Baivere's buildings for at least five years, thereby effecting a big saving, as he formerly has had them repainted every two years.

You figure that Mr. Baivere will need twenty-two barrels of Valdura for his seven buildings. Consequently, you can make him a quantity price of \$14.50 per barrel, which is \$2.00 less than the regular price per barrel.

Write the letter. Give it a definite "tang" of the "you attitude." Personalize your message.

7. You are the Vice President and General Manager of the Jerrydon Manufacturing Company which manufactures and sells directly to retailers, women's dresses.

It is your custom each year during the middle of February to send a form letter to prospective customers announcing your line of Spring and Summer Dresses. You offer to ship express prepaid a few of your new numbers for their approval. Your prices range from \$8.50 up to \$14.75 in taffetas, satins, and silk poplins,—all shades.

You enclose in your order a little folder picturing in lithographed colors a few of the new numbers. Terms 3% 10 days, or 2% 30 days. Your reason for being able to sell your dresses at low prices is that you have no salesman to pay commissions to, and your overhead expense is very small.

Write the letter. Your prospective customers are small-town retailers.

8. You are the Sales Manager for the Peebles Motor Sales Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma. You notice that there are a great many carpenters working on houses and other new buildings on the outskirts of the town away from the street car lines. By means of a makeshift market survey you have found that not quite 10% of these carpenters drive to work in cars. In view of the fact that carpenters receive from \$10 to \$12 per day, you believe they furnish a fertile territory for the sale of your cars.

Picture what a car will do for the prospect—its usefulness—rather than describe the car. Capitalize on the low price of the car and your new easy time payment plan. (\$25 down, and \$10 per month.)

Write the letter. Try to get him to request that a salesman call.

9. You are the Sales Manager for the Old English Wax Company. As it is early spring, housecleaning is on the housewife's program for the coming month or so. Keep the following facts in mind: You have been making and improving Old English Wax for the last 26 years. It can be easily and quickly rubbed to a polish. It gives a smooth, wear-resisting finish. It can be applied with a rag to your furniture, your woodwork, and to the finish on your car. For applying the wax to floors, you have a special floor mop. Your special Old English Household Waxing set, which consists of a one-pound can of Old English Wax and a special Old English Waxing Mop, is being offered at the price of \$2.25 for a limited time. The regular price is \$3.00.

Write a letter to housewives in regard to Old English Wax. Concentrate on gaining attention and creating interest.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XX

### *Sales Presentation: Attention and Interest*

1. You are to assume that the proprietor of a department store selling to a high class of trade but not to an extravagant class, has asked your firm, an advertising company specializing in the writing of sales letters, to write a letter to develop the sale of a middle grade of clothing, clothing made of good quality material, conservative in color, lines, and selling at fair prices. In the past, this line has not been so profitable as the cheaper grades, but it will become popular if pushed, and the proprietor realizes that the current psychology is manifesting a reaction against luxury in dress.

Some of the talking points are: A feeling of being well-dressed gives a confidence to the wearer that helps him professionally. A suit made of good quality, conservative in lines and color, especially if well cared for, will look well two or three times as long as a cheaper suit even though the cheaper suit is strictly up to date in lines and color.

Being well-dressed is a matter of being suitably dressed for an occasion. More attention needs to be given, and the larger amount of one's clothes fund expended on the clothes one needs most.

The matter of price should be featured, but emphasis should be laid not on initial cost, but permanent cost. Cost should be stressed in reference to service and satisfaction.

Concerning style and tone, keep in mind that your customers are high-class.

2. You are the proprietor of Deplar Springs, a little vacation spot just four miles out of Cambridgetown, Massachusetts.

Deplar Springs is a charmingly wooded park covering about one hundred and ninety acres. Besides the beautiful, cool, mossy springs, there is Deplar Lake which is three miles long and over one mile wide. You have motor-boats, sail-boats, row-boats, and canoes for rent at reasonable rates.

Your cabins, each of which will accommodate eight people, rent for \$10 each for a week-end. Your dance pavilion and its famous orchestra, The Deplar Syncopators, is renowned all over the State. You have dancing from 2:30 to 5:30 P.M. and from 8:30 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. The Deplar bathing beach is unexcelled. Draft a letter to summer school students in Cambridgetown inviting them to get up parties to come out to Deplar Springs for the week-ends. Emphasize the fact that you cater to college people.

3. Rewrite the following sales letter so that it immediately gains attention and creates interest:

Dear Sir:

You will receive soon one of our 1920 Automobile Supply Catalogues. Reference to the first few pages of this book will give you first hand knowledge concerning Tuffside Cord and Fabric Tires. If you have never used Tuffside, your first impression is apt to be something like this:—

“Hm! It must be another ‘cheap’ tire.  
How can they afford to sell standard  
tires with regulation guarantees at such  
prices?”

There's a reason. Tuffsides are made especially for us—built according to our own specifications. The manufacturer is not

compelled to create nation-wide interest in his product, and to market it. Thus, the usual enormous advertising expense is cut out entirely; likewise, salaries and commissions to high-gearred salesmen, and discounts and advertising helps to hundreds of dealers and agents. Just think for a moment what remarkable savings this represents! That's why you get Tuffside tires at prices so low.

Tuffside Tires are not "cheap" tires. The Tuffside Tire is **THE ECONOMICAL TIRE.**

Our Tuffside Tire Guarantees are straightforward—sincere. If you don't get every inch of the promised mileage, you are entitled to a fair adjustment. The fact that we have to make but a very small percentage of adjustments is convincing evidence of the reliability of Tuffside Tires.

Better order your Tuffside now, while our present prices are in effect. The money you save on tires will pay for many other things in our Automobile Book that you will want.

Yours very truly,

HIBBARD, JONES, HAYTON.

4. Rewrite the following sales letter so that it readily gains attention and creates interest in your Auto Mailing Lists:

Bates Drill Co.  
820 Chestnut,  
Rockford, Ill.

Gentlemen:

For 20 years we have been compiling Auto Mailing Lists and have over 5,000 auto customers. Note price list enclosed on page 4 for our list of:

Auto Dealers  
Garages  
Supplies  
Repairs  
Battery &  
Filling Stations



handling supplies and tires in one list without duplications 164,533 per M. \$5.00. Then note page 2 in the 7th column for special list of Tire & Supply Dealers. This list covers all the dealers in the U. S. selling tires per M. \$6.50.

We want you to read the circular enclosed with the yellow one. Read carefully the 2nd paragraph regarding the Tire Dealers list in case you are making a specialty of tires.

Note carefully pages 1, 2, & 3. With page 4 these are all new lists for March, 1925, guaranteed better than 95%. You can get nothing in the way of lists that will compare with these up to date lists from any other source. You likely contemplate making a mailing to the Retail Dealers this spring. Write us fully your needs.

Sincerely yours,

P. S. Will be pleased to submit a sample List of your town or any locality for Inspection.

P. S. If its any other mailing list you want, ask for our General Price List showing 4,000 other lists. It's Free.

P. S. Note our rating in your agency book \$125,000 highest credit.

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XXI

### *Sales Presentation: Conviction and Action*

1. Assume that you have organized a small company of three students to render a pressing service to students and faculty. You want to write a sales letter to be sent to 3,000 persons, informing them of the exact nature of the service you have to offer.

Your talking points are these: It is a matter of common sense to be well-groomed. It aids one professionally. It is less expensive to keep one's clothing in good shape through keeping it pressed than it is to keep it in shape by having a large wardrobe or buying clothing frequently.

Cost should not be stressed. The price is small if the quality of service is considered.

An example of price for initial service may be given. The letter should be designed to prove the writer's ability to sell to people of culture and refinement, but with a small income.

2. Your problem here is to write a letter trying to get an immediate order by mail, improving upon the following presentation of facts in every way possible.

### ST. LAWRENCE COFFEE & SPICE MILLS

Importers and Exporters

New Orleans, La.

1/19/25

Attention: The Commissary.

#### TRY AJAX COFFEE.

1. A blend special for hotels and restaurants.
2. Uniform, stout, aromatic, smooth-blended, satisfying.
3. Will stand up in the urn almost indefinitely—not get stale or deteriorate after being brewed.
4. Delivered in drums, or in 1 lb. sealed wax-paper sacks.
5. Roasted fresh the same day shipment is made.
6. Fifty cents per pound F.O.B. New Orleans.
7. Usual terms, 2% 10 days, net 30 days, to responsible names.

|        |                 |         |
|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Let us | Cheaper coffees | Cocoa   |
| quote  | Baking powder   | Paprika |
| you    | Extracts        | Pepper  |
| on     | Cocoanut        | Teas    |

Write us NOW. Orders are filled on the day received.

### ST. LAWRENCE COFFEE & SPICE MILLS.

Assume that there has been a national advertising campaign to make the name AJAX COFFEE favorably known to your prospects. You are featuring this product in an effort to get new customers. This is the first letter on AJAX COFFEE to commissaries.

Aim at a coherent presentation of the facts to support one central selling point, interesting to the class of prospects addressed. Use a conversational tone.

3. Rewrite the following letter which is supposed to be the clincher of a four-series follow-up, but which failed to secure a satisfactory number of orders:

Mr. James Edwards,  
Evanston, Ill.

Dear Sir:

We have not had the pleasure of having received a reply to the letter we addressed to you about two weeks ago, and we pause to ask if you received that letter, as well as the catalog which we mailed you at the same time. If so, we trust that our prices and superior quality of the Virtuoso Piano Player have so interested you as to insure your order when you are ready to purchase. If, however, the catalog and letter did not reach you, kindly advise us, and we will mail duplicates.

We are real anxious to secure your order, yet do not want to annoy you continually with a lot of stereotyped letters such as are generally sent out by factories selling their products by mail—in other words we do not abruptly conclude that simply because you were kind enough to write us relative to our goods that you are under obligations to buy of us. We trust, however, that after you have gone over the matter very carefully you will decide that our Virtuoso Player is the best for the money, and that when you are ready to purchase, you will favor us with your order, as we know you will never have any cause to regret it.

In the meantime, if you have no objections, we will mail you now and then illustrations and descriptions of each of our new styles as we place them on the market, feeling that you will be interested in the latest up-to-date styles, even though you may not be in immediate need of them yourself.

Again thanking you for the inquiry,

Very truly yours,

You have these facts in mind in rewriting it:

The customer has sent an inquiry after seeing an advertisement in a magazine. The central selling point has been, "positively the biggest value that your money can purchase." There are 6,265 satisfied owners of the Virtuoso Piano Player. The average sale per month has been over 500. The unsolicited

testimonials are filling the firm's letter files. The piano will be sent on a thirty-day trial at the owner's risk of the first month's payment of \$15. The piano is sent if the deposit blank is signed and \$10 enclosed.

4. Complete the following sales letter for Blank Coal using the following data to gain belief:

A wide-awake engineer is more concerned with his coal cost per 100 pounds of steam than with the price of coal per ton. It reduces fuel costs 10 to 15 per cent. A plant at Harrisburg, Saline County, Illinois, is cutting costs 10% by using it. A chart showing the evaporative power of various coals will be furnished on request. The chart has been published in "The Black Diamond," a magazine about coal.

Dear Sir:

The fact that Armour & Company and Wilson & Company have been using Blank Coal for over ten years, backs our statement that there is no better coal reaching this market. Neither sentiment nor politics play any part in their buying.

A man in the responsible position you occupy doubtless gets the maximum efficiency out of the coal furnished him, but if you are not receiving the coal best adapted for your plant, or that will yield the most pounds of steam for a dollar's worth of coal, there is need for greater coöperation between you and your purchasing agent.

Yours truly,

## PROBLEMS FOR CHAPTER XXII

### *Follow-Up Sales Letters*

1. The proprietor of a large, high-class jewelry store wants to send out a shop-early Christmas letter to prospective Christmas customers. He wants to push the idea that jewelry, watches, diamonds, silverware, and the artistic, useful novelties jewelers deal in make the most sensible and lasting gifts of all.

Write a unit of the continuous campaign.

2. The White Cross Electrical Company has just perfected a new two plate, 3-heat electric range with oven which is priced low enough to come within the buying power of a great many people who have often wanted an electric stove, but who have been financially unable to buy one because of the high price.

Specifications: Stove, 11" x 24" x 5½" high.

Oven, 11" x 11" x 12" wide.

Description: The stove is constructed of heavy steel, finished triple baked enamel, nickel-trimmed. It is equipped with two high heat resisting plates with genuine Nichrome wire; two 3-heat, 4-station reciprocating switches (high, medium, low, and out) and standard length cord with plug.

The oven is made of heavy uniform blue steel with nickel-trimmed door. The drop oven door is equipped with automatic supporting rods. The inside of the oven is equipped with double heat spreader and two adjustable grids. The walls are double lined with asbestos to hold all heat. The oven can be used on either right or left burner or can be removed, making both burners available for other cooking.

As a whole, this new stove is unusually substantial in construction, has a good appearance, and is economical on current consumption. The stove sells for \$14.00, and it will be shipped at the company's risk on thirty days' approval.

Write the first letter of a wear-out follow-up campaign.

3. As Sales Manager of the Yellow Cab Manufacturing Corporation, you are wishing to push the sale of the new Yellow Cab Delivery Car. You plan to send out a campaign follow-up composed wholly of letters to prospective customers to induce them to authorize you to send a salesman to see them. You have the following talking points from which to choose:

1. Economical to buy because it delivers most miles in proportion to initial cost.
2. Economical to operate because it delivers miles at the lowest maintenance cost on record.
3. Customer preference—because customer judges the character of the establishment by the type of delivery used.
4. Driver preference—because he likes the deep, comfortable bucket seat, easy handling and general balance of the Yellow Cab Delivery Car.

5. Yellow Cab Cost Accounting. Because the Yellow Cab Manufacturing Corporation makes available to its truck customers the operating knowledge acquired in fourteen years' successful commercial car experience.
6. Fine appearance because of its custom-built body, finished as carefully as the finest passenger car.
7. Easy to service because the Yellow Cab Delivery Car is the heritage of billions of miles of experience, where accessibility is the keynote.
8. "Traffic-ability"—especially built to be easily maneuvered through congested traffic.
9. Direct responsibility. No intermediary between the customer and the manufacturer.
10. Same type delivery unit used by 1,050 of the country's largest fleet operators.
11. Takes your delivery department out of the "fixed-overhead" class and actually puts it on an earning basis.

Plan the length of the campaign, the nature and number of letters, the sales steps to be accomplished by each letter, and the central talking point of each letter. Give the elements to be used in the clincher.

4. Secure a copy of the *Literary Digest* and write a form letter to sell the magazine direct by mail to people.

5. Assume that you are Sales Manager for the Anti-Theft Auto Lock for Ford cars. You are putting a new patent lock on the market, a device designed to prevent automobiles from being stolen when parked.

The lock is a circular piece of steel of heavy construction with one part of the surface pointed. It can be fastened over the rim of the wheel because its two halves are hinged together. The lock closes because of a spring, but the device can be unlocked only by means of a key which is different for every lock. The lock cannot be removed except by filing through a heavy steel band two inches thick; nor can the car be driven with speed or safety with the lock fastened to the wheel, since the point raises the wheel six inches at every revolution. When not in use, the lock may be carried conveniently in the tool box of the car.



The price of the article is \$7.50 prepaid. The seller pays delivery expense. You have decided to send a single sales letter to each of a selected group of 50,000 owners of Ford cars.

6. You are the Sales Manager for the Hofstra Non-Poisonous Insecticide Manufacturing Company. This insecticide is in the form of powder, is harmless to the most delicate of fabrics and will not injure the finish on furniture. It is odorless and is invisible. You are making a special offer to dealers of 12 Refillable Metal Guns loaded for spraying and set up on an attractive counter display board for \$1.10. The regular price is \$1.35. The filled Hofstra spray guns are to retail at 15¢ each.

Write a letter selling this special offer to retail grocers.

7. You are the owner of a high-class neighborhood grocery store. Just recently you have redecorated and have purchased and installed a complete set of new equipment for your store. The new equipment is white porcelain, and your store is now probably the best appearing grocery in the city. Your prices are as reasonable as ever and your service is a great deal more efficient.

- (a) Write a letter to your old customers letting them know of the new improvements and inviting them to visit your new store. Try to induce them to buy more at your store.
- (b) Write a letter to prospective customers in the neighborhood to try to induce them to come to your store to inspect the new equipment and to see how well prepared you are to serve them. Also bring out the idea that your prices are very reasonable.

8. Mr. R. A. Cullen is the Supervising Architect of a large Eastern University. At this University two new buildings costing nearly a million dollars are under construction. Mr. Cullen is especially interested in considering the desirability of cork linoleum as a covering for the floors of the new school buildings that are under construction.

Consequently, he wrote to the Converse Cork Linoleum Company asking for the booklet, "Cork Linoleum and the Public Building."

The following is the letter that he received:

Mr. R. A. Cullen,  
229 Fourth Avenue,  
New York City.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find our booklet, *Cork Linoleum and the Public Building*, which you requested in your letter of the 29th.

Very truly yours,

N. N. Haber,  
Sales Manager.

Write this letter as you would have written it. Include sales material. Take advantage of Mr. Cullen's interest in cork linoleum as a possible floor covering for the new University buildings.

#### TOPICS FOR REPORTS FOR CHAPTER XXIII

##### *Reports*

The topics listed are adapted especially for long reports, but have been satisfactorily used for short reports. They are suggestive only and may be easily extended by keeping a list of the topics as they come up in class discussion. The following list has arisen from class-room discussion of business letter writing.

If the topics are assigned at the beginning of the semester, and the work prepared for by a one-hour talk on reports, the student can lay his plan and be gathering material for his report. Consequently, when he comes to the intensive study of reports, he will have the material collected and will have nothing left to do but to learn the current practices governing the preparation of reports.

Talk with business men or write to business firms wherever the nature of the problem and the interest of the firm justifies it. Such a procedure will also test a student's letter writing ability.

#### TOPICS FOR PROBLEMS ON LONG REPORTS

1. Contents of a Company Magazine.
2. Helps on Writing Sales Letters.

3. Report on Business Writing in the Commercial World.
4. Letters Written a Firm.
5. Survey of December, 1925, Magazine Article on Direct by Mail Advertising and Selling.
6. The Function of the House Organ.
7. Methods of Direct by Mail Advertising and Selling.
8. Report on Correspondence Supervision.
9. Report on Goodyear, or American Rolling Mill Company's Correspondence Supervision.
10. Report on Study of English Literature in Colleges of Commerce.
11. How the Grocers of a Certain Town Can Combat the Chain Store Competition.
12. Methods of Correspondence Supervision Suggested in the Better Letters Association, or in the Direct by Mail Advertising Association Bulletins.
13. Policies of the Bank House Organ.
14. Retail Collection Methods.
15. Direct Mail Advertising in Women's Industries.
16. Report on Sales Policy of Some Company.
17. Report on Advertising and Shorthand.
18. How to Compile a Mailing List for a Firm.
19. History of Correspondence Supervision.
20. Legal Points in Use of Mails.
21. History of Direct Mail Advertising and Selling.
22. Report on Dictating Letters in College Courses in Business Correspondence.

#### PROBLEMS ON SHORT REPORTS

Write a short report (not more than two single-spaced, type-written pages) on any one of the following subjects. Address informally any friend or acquaintance possibly interested in the subject which you have investigated. Be sure to include all essential facts and details, remembering, however, that you are writing a *short* report which will be sent in the form of a letter to the person who is to read it.

As an illustration of the inclusion of all essential points, on the first topic, consider the various sources—inside of the store, outside of the store, or from the city; the means of combating

fires—chemicals or water, automatic sprinklers or hydrants; the efficiency of the system as shown by past experience.

*Topics:* An inspection of the fire protection of a department store; a memorandum of a personal budget for a week; a memorandum regarding the average number of nights during the week when students study; an exposition of the methods used to ship baby chickens; a memorandum of the operating expenses of your car during one week; an investigation of the condition of the pavement in front of your house; a test of an engine of any kind; an investigation of the best paint for structural iron work; memorandum of the mean, modal, maximum, and minimum speed of automobiles passing your house during one hour; investigation of the efficiency of your city's method of controlling and regulating traffic; a statement of your hours of recreation during a week; a memorandum of the cost during any four weeks of (1) your golf club or (2) your fraternity or (3) your lodge or (4) your motor club; an investigation of the type of show window lighting used by four of the largest downtown stores in your city; an investigation of the ventilation of your study room; a memorandum regarding the amounts of gasoline, water, and oil consumed by a motorcycle and an automobile on a 10 mile run; a memorandum regarding the consumption and cost of the water consumed by your city in twenty-four hours; an investigation of the efficiency of the street cleaning department of your city.

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## POINTS ILLUSTRATED BY THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTERS AND CUTS IN THE TEXT

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